

The Complete
Short Stories
of Guy de
Maupassant
Part Two



Guy de Maupassant

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Complete Short Stories
of
GUY DE
MAUPASSANT



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Part 2

VOLUME V

Caught

A YOUNG and charming lady, who was a member of the Viennese aristocracy, went last summer, without her husband, as many young and charming ladies do, to a fashionable Austrian watering place, Karlsbad, much frequented by foreigners.

As is usually the case in their rank of life, she had married from family considerations and for money; and the short spell of love after marriage was not sufficient to take deep root. After she had satisfied family traditions and her husband's wishes by giving birth to a son and heir, they both went their way; the young, handsome, and fascinating man to his clubs, to the race-course, and behind the scenes at the theaters, and his charming, coquettish wife to her box at the opera, to the south in winter, and to some fashionable watering-place in the summer.

On the present occasion she brought with her from one of the latter resorts a young, very highly-connected Pole who enjoyed all the rights and the liberty of an avowed favorite, and, performed all the duties of a slave.

As is usual in such cases, the lady rented a small house in one of the suburbs of Vienna, had it beautifully furnished, and received her lover there. She was always dressed very attractively, sometimes as "La Belle Hélène" in Offenbach's opera, only rather more after the ancient Greek fashion; another time as an *odalisque* in the Sultan's harem, and another time as a light-hearted Suabian girl, and so forth. In winter, however, she grew tired of such meetings, and as she wanted to have matters arranged more comfortably she

took it into her head to receive her lover in her own house. But how was it to be done?

That, however, gave her no particular difficulty, as is the case with every woman, when once she has made up her mind to a thing. After thinking it over for a day or two she went to the next rendezvous, with a fully prepared plan of war.

The Pole was one of those ^{types of} handsome men which are rare. He was almost womanly in the delicacy of his features, of middle height, slim, and well-made, and resembled a youthful Bacchus who might very easily be made to pass for a Venus by the help of false locks—the more so as there was not even the slightest down on his lips. The lady, therefore, who was very fertile in resources, suggested to the handsome Pole that he might just as well transform himself into a handsome Polish lady, so that he might, under cover of the feminine, be able to visit her undisturbed. As it was winter, a thick, heavy, voluminous dress assisted the metamorphosis.

The lady, accordingly, bought a number of very beautiful costumes for her lover, and in the course of a few days told her husband that a charming young Polish lady, whose acquaintance she had made in the summer at Karlsbad, was going to spend the winter in Vienna, and would very frequently come and see her. Her husband listened to her with the greatest indifference, for it was one of his fundamental rules never to make love to any of his wife's female friends. He went to his club as usual at night,

and the next day had forgotten all about the Polish lady.

Half an hour after the husband had left the house, a cab drove up, and a tall, slim, heavily veiled lady got out and went up the thickly carpeted stairs, only to be metamorphosed into the most ardent lover in the young woman's boudoir. The young Pole grew accustomed to his female attire so quickly that he even ventured to appear in the streets in it, and when he began to make conquests, and aristocratic gentlemen and successful speculators on the Stock Exchange looked at him significantly and even followed him, he took a real pleasure in the part he was playing, beginning to understand the pleasure a coquette feels in tormenting men.

The young Pole became more and more daring, until one evening he went to a private box at the opera, wrapped in an ermine cloak, on to which his dark, false curls fell in heavy waves.

A handsome young man in a box opposite to him ogled him incessantly from the first moment, and the young Pole responded in a manner which made the other bolder every minute. At the end of the third act the box-opener brought the fictitious Venus a small bouquet with a card concealed in it, on which was written in pencil:

"You are the most lovely woman in the world, and I implore you on my knees to grant me an interview."

The young Pole read the name of the man who had been captivated so quickly, and, with a peculiar smile, wrote on a card on which nothing but the name "Valeska" was printed: "After

the theater," and sent Cupid's messenger back with it.

When the spurious Venus was about to enter her carriage after the performance, thickly veiled and wrapped in her ermine cloak, the handsome young man was standing by it with his hat off, and he opened the door for her. She was kind enough to allow him to get in with her, and during their drive she talked to him in the most charming manner, but she was cruel enough to dismiss him without pity before they reached her house. She went to the theater each night now, and every evening received an ardent note. Each evening she allowed the amorous swain to accompany her as far as her house, and men were beginning to envy him his brilliant conquest, when a catastrophe happened which was very surprising for all concerned.

The husband of the lady in whose eyes the Pole had found favor surprised the loving couple one day under circumstances which made any justification impossible. But while he, trembling with rage and jealousy, was drawing a small Circassian dagger which hung against the wall from its sheath, and as his wife threw herself, half fainting on to a couch, the young Pole had hastily put the false curls on to his head and had slipped into the silk dress and the sable cloak which he had been wearing when he came into his mistress's boudoir.

"What does this mean," the husband stammered, "Valeska?"

"Yes, sir" the young Pole replied; "Valeska, who has come here to show your wife a few love letters, which—"

"No, no," the deceived, but nevertheless guilty, husband said in implor-

ing accents; "no that is quite unnecessary." And at the same time he put the dagger back into its sheath.

"Very well, then, there is a truce between us," the Pole observed coolly, "but do not forget what weapons I possess, and which I mean to retain against all contingencies."

Then the gentlemen bowed politely to each other, and the unexpected meeting came to an end.

From that time forward the terms on which the young married couple lived together assumed the character of that everlasting peace which President Grant once promised the whole world in his message to all nations. The young woman did not find it necessary to make her lover put on petticoats, and the husband constantly accompanies the real Valeska a good deal further than he did the false one on that memorable occasion.

The Orderly

THE cemetery, filled with officers, looked like a field covered with flowers. The *kêpis* and the red trousers, the stripes and the gold buttons, the shoulder-knots of the staff, the braid of the chasseurs and the hussars, passed through the midst of the tombs, whose crosses, white or black, opened their mournful arms—their arms of iron, marble, or wood—over the vanished race of the dead.

Colonel Limousin's wife had just been buried. She had been drowned, two days before, while taking a bath. It was over. The clergy had left; but the Colonel, supported by two brother-officers, remained standing in front of the pit, at the bottom of which he saw still the oaken coffin, wherein lay, already decomposed, the body of his young wife.

He was almost an old man, tall and thin, with white mustaches; and, three years ago, he had married the daughter of a comrade, left an orphan on the death of her father, Colonel Sortis.

The Captain and the Lieutenant, on whom their commanding officer was leaning, attempted to lead him away. He resisted, his eyes full of tears, which he heroically held back, and murmuring, "No, no, a little while longer!" he persisted in remaining there, his legs bending under him, at the side of that pit, which seemed to him bottomless, an abyss into which had fallen his heart and his life, all that he held dear on earth.

Suddenly, General Ormont came up, seized the Colonel by the arm, and dragging him from the spot almost by force, said: "Come, come, my old comrade! you must not remain here."

The Colonel thereupon obeyed, and went back to his quarters. As he opened the door of his study, saw a letter on the table, when he took it in his hands, he was near falling with surprise and emotion: he recognized his wife's handwriting. And the letter bore the postmark and the date of the same day. He tore open the envelope and read:

"Father: Permit me to call you still father as in days gone by. When you receive this letter, I shall be dead, and under the clay. Therefore, perhaps, you may forgive me.

"I do not want to excite your pity or to extenuate my sin. I only want to tell the entire and complete truth, with all the sincerity of a woman who, in an hour's time, is going to kill herself.

"When you married me through generosity, I gave myself to you through gratitude, and I loved you with all my girlish heart. I loved you as I loved my own father—almost as much; and one day, while I sat on your knee, and you were kissing me, I called you 'Father' in spite of myself. It was a cry of the heart, instinctive, spontaneous. Indeed, you were to me a father, nothing but a father. You laughed, and said to me, 'Address me always in that way, my child; it gives me pleasure.'

"We came to the city; and—forgive me, father—I fell in love. Ah! I resisted long, well, nearly two years—and then I yielded, I sinned, I became a fallen woman.

"And as to him? You will never guess who he is. I am easy enough about that matter, since there were a dozen officers always around me and with me, whom you called my twelve constellations.

"Father, do not seek to know him, and do not hate him. He only did what any man, no matter whom, would have done in his place, and then I am sure that he loved me, too, with all his heart.

"But listen! One day we had an appointment in the isle of Bécasses—you know the little isle, close to the mill. I had to get there by swimming, and he had to wait for me in a thicket, and then

to remain there till nightfall so that nobody should see him going away. I had just met him when the branches opened, and we saw Philippe, your orderly, who had surprised us. I felt that we were lost, and I uttered a great cry. Thereupon he said to me,—he, my lover,—'Go, swim back quietly, my darling, and leave me here with this man.'

"I went away so excited that I was near drowning myself, and I came back to you expecting that something dreadful was about to happen.

"An hour later, Philippe said to me in a low tone, in the lobby outside the drawing-room where I met him: 'I am at Madame's orders, if she has any letters to give me.' Then I knew that he had sold himself and that my lover had bought him.

"I gave him some letters, in fact—all my letters—he took them away, and brought me back the answers.

"This lasted about two months. We had confidence in him, as you had confidence in him yourself.

"Now, father, here is what happened. One day, in the same isle which I had to reach by swimming, but this time alone, I found your orderly. This man had been waiting for me; and he informed me that he was going to reveal everything about us to you, and deliver to you letters he had kept, stolen, if I did not yield to his desires.

"Oh! father, father, I was filled with fear—a cowardly fear, an unworthy fear, a fear above all of you, who had been so good to me, and whom I had deceived—fear on his account too—you would have killed him—for myself also perhaps! I cannot tell; I was mad, desperate; I thought of once more buy-

ing this wretch, who loved me, too—how shameful!

“We are so weak, we women, we lose our heads more easily than you do. And then, when a woman once falls, she always falls lower and lower. Did I know what I was doing? I understood only that one of you two and I were going to die—and I gave myself to this brute.

“You see, father, that I do not seek to excuse myself. Then, then—then what I should have foreseen happened—he had the better of me again and again, when he wished, by terrifying me. He, too, has been my lover, like the other, every day. Is not this abominable? And what punishment, father?

“So then it is all over with me. I must die. While I lived, I could not confess such a crime to you. Dead, I dare everything. I could not do otherwise than die—nothing could have washed me clean—I was too polluted. I could no longer love or be loved. It seemed to me that I stained everyone by merely allowing my hand to be touched.

“Presently I am going to take my bath, and I will never come back. This letter for you will go to my lover. It will reach him when I am dead, and without anyone knowing anything about it, he will forward it to you, accomplish-

ing my last wishes. And you shall read it on your return from the cemetery.

“Adieu, father! I have no more to tell you. Do whatever you wish, and forgive me.”

The Colonel wiped his forehead, which was covered with perspiration. His coolness, the coolness of days when he had stood on the field of battle suddenly came back to him. He rang.

A manservant made his appearance. “Send in Philippe to me,” said the Colonel. Then he opened the drawer of his table.

The man entered almost immediately—a big soldier with red mustaches, a malignant look, and a cunning eye.

The Colonel looked him straight in the face.

“You are going to tell me the name of my wife’s lover.”

“But, my Colonel—”

The officer snatched his revolver out of the half-open drawer.

“Come! quick! You know I do not jest!”

“Well—my Colonel—it is Captain Saint-Albert.”

Scarcely had he pronounced this name when a flame flashed between his eyes, and he fell on his face, his forehead pierced by a ball.

Joseph

THEY were both of them drunk, quite drunk, tiny Baroness Andrée de la Fraisières and little Countess Noemi de

Gardens. They had dined alone together, in the large room facing the sea. The soft breeze of a summer evening

blew in at the open window, soft and fresh at the same time, a breeze that smelled of the sea. The two young women, stretched at length in their lounging chairs, sipped their Char-treuse as they smoked their cigarettes, talking most confidentially, telling each other details which nothing but this charming intoxication could have permitted their pretty lips to utter.

Their husbands had returned to Paris that afternoon, leaving them alone in that little watering-place which they had chosen so as to avoid those gallant marauders who are constantly encountered at fashionable seaside resorts. As they were absent for five days in the week, they objected to country excursions, luncheons on the grass, swimming lessons, and those sudden familiarities which spring up in the idle life of similar resorts. To them Dieppe, Etretat, Trouville seemed places to be avoided, and they had rented a house which had been built and abandoned by an eccentric individual in the valley of Roqueville, near Fécamp, and there they buried their wives for the whole summer.

The two ladies were drunk. Not knowing what to hit upon to amuse themselves, the little Baroness had suggested a good dinner and champagne. To begin with, they had found great amusement in cooking this dinner themselves; then they had eaten it merrily, and had imbibed freely, in order to allay the thirst excited by the heat of the fire. Now they were chattering and talking nonsense, from time to time gently moistening their throats with Char-treuse. In fact they did not in the

least know any longer what they were saying.

The Countess, with her feet in the air on the back of a chair, was further gone than her friend.

"To complete an evening like this," she said, "we ought to have a gallant apiece. Had I foreseen this some time ago, I would have sent to Paris for two men I know, and would have let you have one."

"I can always find one," the other replied; "I could have one this very evening, if I wished."

"What nonsense! At Roqueville, my dear? It would have to be some peasant, then."

"No, not altogether."

"Well, tell me all about it."

"What do you want me to tell you?"

"About your lover."

"My dear, I do not want to live without being loved, for I should fancy I was dead if I were not loved."

"So should I."

"Is not that so?"

"Yes. Men cannot understand it! And especially our husbands!"

"No, not in the least. How can you expect it to be different? The love which we want is made up of being spoiled, of gallantries, and of pretty words and actions. That is the nourishment of our hearts; it is indispensable to our life, indispensable, indispensable."

"True, dear."

"I must feel that somebody is thinking of me, always, everywhere. When I go to sleep and when I wake up, I must know that somebody loves me somewhere, that I am being dreamed of, longed for. Without that, I should be

wretched, wretched! Oh! yes, unhappy enough to do nothing but cry."

"I am just the same."

"You must remember that anything else is impossible. After a husband has been nice for six months, or a year, or two years, he usually degenerates into a brute, yes, a regular brute. He won't put himself out for anything, but shows his real self; he makes a scene on the slightest provocation, and sometimes without any provocation whatever. One cannot love a man with whom one lives constantly."

"That is quite true."

"Isn't it? What was I saying? I cannot in the least remember?"

"You were saying that all husbands are brutes!"

"Yes, brutes. All of them."

"That is true."

"And then?"

"What do you mean?"

"What was I saying just then?"

"I don't know, because you did not say it!"

"But I had something to tell you."

"Oh! yes; well, go on."

"Oh! I have got it."

"Well, I am listening."

"I was telling you that I can find lovers everywhere."

"How do you manage it?"

"Like this. Now follow me carefully. When I get to some fresh place, I take notes and make my choice."

"You make your choice?"

"Yes, of course I do. First of all, I take notes. I ask questions. Above all, a man must be discreet, rich, and generous; is not that so?"

"Quite true!"

"And then he must please me, as a man."

"Of course."

"Then I bait the hook for him."

"Bait the hook?"

"Yes, just as one does to catch fish. Have you never fished with a hook and line?"

"No, never."

"You've lost some fun, then; it is very amusing, and besides that, instructive. Well, then, I bait the hook."

"How do you do it?"

"How dense you are. Don't we catch the men we want to catch, without their having any choice? And they really think that they choose—the fools—but it is we who choose—always. Just think, when one is not ugly, or stupid, as is the case with us, all men run after us, all—without exception. We look them over from morning till night, and when we have selected one, we fish for him."

"But that does not tell me how you do it."

"How I do it! Why, I do nothing; I allow myself to be looked at, that is all."

"Only allow yourself to be looked at?"

"Why yes; that is quite enough. When you have allowed yourself to be looked at several times, a man immediately thinks you the most lovely, the most seductive of women, and then he begins to make love to you. You give him to understand that he is not bad looking, without actually saying anything to him, of course, and he falls in love, like a log. You have him fast, and it lasts a longer or a shorter time, according to his qualities."

"And do you catch all whom you please like that?"

"Nearly all."

"Oh! So there are some who resist?"

"Sometimes."

"Why?"

"Oh! A man is a Joseph for three reasons: First, because he is in love with another woman; secondly, because he is excessively timid, or thirdly, because he is—how shall I say it?—incapable of carrying out the conquest of a woman to the end."

"Oh! my ear! Do you really believe—"

"I am sure of it. There are many of this latter class, many, many, many more than people think. Oh! they look just like everybody else—they strut like peacocks. No, when I said peacocks, I made a mistake, for they have not a peacock's virility."

"Oh! my dear!"

"As to the timid, they are sometimes unspeakably stupid. They are the sort of men who ought not to undress themselves, even when they are going to bed alone, where there is a looking-glass in the room. With them, one must be energetic, make use of looks, and squeeze their hands, and even that is useless sometimes. They never know how or where to begin. When one faints in their presence—as a last resource—they try to bring you round; and if you do not recover your senses immediately they go and get assistance.

"For myself I confess to a preference for other women's lovers. I carry them by assault at the point of the bayonet, my dear!"

"That is all very well, but when

there are no men, as in this place, for instance?"

"I find them!"

"You find them. But where?"

"Everywhere. But that reminds me of my story.

"Now listen. Just two years ago my husband made me pass the summer on his estate at Bougrolles. There was nothing there—you know what I mean, nothing, nothing, nothing whatever! In the neighboring country houses there were a few disgusting boors, men who cared for nothing but shooting, and lived in country houses which had not even a bathroom. They were the sort of men who go to bed covered with perspiration, men you can't improve, because their daily lives are dirty. Now just guess what I did!"

"I cannot possibly."

"Ha! ha! ha! I had just been reading a number of George Sand's novels which exalt the man of the people, novels in which the workmen are sublime, and the men of the world are criminals. In addition to this I had seen "Ruy Blas" the winter before, and it had impressed me very much. Well, one of our farmers had a son, a good-looking young fellow of two-and-twenty who had studied for the priesthood, but had left the seminary in disgust. Well, I took him as footman!"

"Oh! And then? What afterward?"

"Then—then, my dear, I treated him very haughtily, but let him see a good deal of my person. I did not entice this rustic on, I simply inflamed him!"

"Oh! Andrée!"

"Yes, and I enjoyed the fun very much. People say that servants count for nothing! Well he did not count for

much. I used to give him his orders every morning while my maid was dressing me, and every evening as well, while she was undressing me."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"My dear, he caught fire like a thatched roof. Then, at meals, I used continually to talk about cleanliness, about taking care of one's person, about baths and shower baths, until at the end of a fortnight he bathed in the river morning and night, and used so much scent as to poison the whole château. I had to forbid him to use perfume, telling him, with furious looks, that men ought never to use any scent but Eau de Cologne."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"Then, I took it into my head to get together a library suitable to the country. I sent for a few hundred moral novels, which I lent to all our peasants, and all my servants. A few books—a few poetical books, such as excite the minds of schoolboys and schoolgirls, had found their way into my collection. These, I gave to my footman. That taught him life—a funny sort of life."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"Then I grew familiar with him, and used to 'thou' * him. I had given him the name of Joseph. My dear, he was in a terrible state. He got as thin as a barn-door cock, and rolled his eyes like an idiot. I was extremely amused; it was one of the most delightful summers I ever spent."

"And then?"

"Then? Oh! yes, one day when my husband was away from home, I told him to order the basket carriage and to drive me into the woods. It was warm, very warm. There!"

"Oh! Andrée, do tell me all about it. It is so amusing."

"Here, have a glass of Chartreuse, otherwise I shall empty the decanter myself. Well, I felt ill on the road."

"How?"

"You are dense. I told him that I was not feeling well and that he must lay me on the grass, and when I was lying there, I told him I was choking and that he must unlace me. And then when I was unlaced, I fainted."

"Did you go right off?"

"Oh! dear no, not the least."

"Well?"

"Well, I was obliged to remain unconscious for nearly an hour, as he could find no means of bringing me round. But I was very patient, and did not open my eyes."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"And what did you say to him?"

"I? Nothing at all! How was I to know anything, as I was unconscious? I thanked him, and told him to help me into the carriage, and he drove me back to the château; but he nearly upset us in turning into the gate!"

"Oh! Andrée! And is that all?"

"That is all."

"You did not faint more than that once?"

"Only once, of course! I did not want to take such a fellow for my lover."

"Did you keep him long after that?"

"Yes, of course. I have him still. Why should I have sent him away? I had nothing to complain of."

*The second person singular is used in French—as in German—among relations and intimate friends, and to servants.

"Oh! Andrée! And is he in love with you still?"

"Of course he is."

"Where is he?"

The little Baroness put out her hand to the wall and touched the electric bell. The door opened almost immediately, and a tall footman came in who diffused a scent of Eau de Cologne all round him.

"Joseph," said the Baroness to him, "I am afraid I am going to faint; send my lady's maid to me."

The man stood motionless, like a

soldier before his officer, looking ardently at his mistress, who continued: "Be quick, you great idiot, we are not in the woods to-day, and Rosalie will attend to me better than you can." He turned on his heels and went, and the Countess asked nervously: "What shall you say to your maid?"

"I shall tell her what we have been doing! No, I shall merely get her to unlace me; it will relieve my chest, for I can scarcely breathe. I am drunk, my dear—so drunk that I should fall, if I were to get up from my chair."

Regret

MONSIEUR SAVEL, who was called in Mantes "Father Savel," had just risen from bed. He wept. It was a dull autumn day; the leaves were falling. They fell slowly in the rain, resembling another rain, but heavier and slower. M. Savel was not in good spirit. He walked from the fireplace to the window, and from the window to the fireplace. Life has its somber days. It will no longer have any but somber days of sixty-two. He is alone, an old bachelor, with nobody about him. How sad it is to die alone, all alone, without the disinterested affection of anyone!

He pondered over his life, so barren, so void. He recalled the days gone by, the days of his infancy, the house, the house of his parents; his college days, his follies, the time of his probation in Paris, the illness of his father, his death. He then returned to live with his mother. They lived together, the young man and

the old woman, very quietly, and desired nothing more. At last the mother died. How sad a thing is life! He has lived always alone, and now, in his turn, he too, will soon be dead. He will disappear, and that will be the finish. There will be no more of Savel upon the earth. What a frightful thing! Other people will live, they will live, they will laugh. Yes, people will go on amusing themselves, and he will no longer exist! Is it not strange that people can laugh, amuse themselves, be joyful under that eternal certainty of death! If this death were only probable, one could then have hope; but no, it is inevitable, as inevitable as that night follows the day.

If, however, his life had been complete! If he had done something; if he had had adventures grand pleasures, successes, satisfaction of some kind or another. But now, nothing. He had done nothing, never anything but rise

from bed, eat, at the same hours, and go to bed again. And he has gone on like that to the age of sixty-two. He had not even taken unto himself a wife, as other men do. Why? Yes, why was it that he was not married? He might have been, for he possessed considerable means. Was it an opportunity which had failed him? Perhaps! But one can create opportunities. He was indifferent; that was all. Indifference had been his greatest drawback, his defect, his vice. How some men miss their lives through indifference! To certain natures, it is so difficult to get out of bed, to move about, to take long walks, to speak, to study any question.

He had not even been in love. No woman had reposed on his bosom, in a complete abandon of love. He knew nothing of this delicious anguish of expectation, of the divine quivering of the pressed hand, of the ecstasy of triumphant passion.

What superhuman happiness must inundate your heart when lips encounter lips for the first time, when the grasp of four arms makes one being of you, a being unutterably happy, two beings infatuated with each other.

M. Savel was sitting down, his feet on the fender, in his dressing gown. Assuredly his life had been spoiled, completely spoiled. He had however, loved. He had loved secretly, dolorously, and indifferently, just as was characteristic of him in everything. Yes, he had loved his old friend, Madame Saudres, the wife of his old companion, Saudres. Ah! if he had known her as a young girl! But he had encountered her too late; she was already married. Unquestionably he would have asked her hand;

that he would! How he had loved her, nevertheless, without respite, since the first day he had set eyes on her!

He recalled, without emotion, all the times he had seen her, his grief on leaving her, the many nights that he could not sleep because of his thinking of her.

In the mornings he always got up somewhat less amorous than in the evening.

Why? Seeing that she was formerly pretty and plump, blond and joyous. Saudres was not the man she would have selected. She was now fifty-two years of age. She seemed happy. Ah! if she had only loved him in days gone by! yes, if she had only loved him! And why should she not have loved him, he, Savel, seeing that he loved her so much, yes, her, Madame Saudres!

If only she could have divined something— Had she not divined anything, had she not seen anything, never comprehended anything? But then, what would she have thought? If he had spoken what would she have answered?

And Savel asked himself a thousand other things. He reviewed his whole life, seeking to grasp again a multitude of details.

He recalled all the long evenings spent at the house of Saudres, when the latter's wife was young and so charming.

He recalled many things that she had said to him, the sweet intonations of her voice, the little significant smiles that meant so much.

He recalled the walks that the three of them had had, along the banks of the Seine, their lunches on the grass on the Sundays, for Saudres was employed at the subprefecture. And all at once the distinct recollection came to him of an

afternoon spent with her in a little plantation on the banks of the river.

They had set out in the morning, carrying their provisions in baskets. It was a bright spring morning, one of those days which inebriate one. Everything smelled fresh, everything seemed happy. The voices of the birds sounded more joyous, and the flapping of their wings more rapid. They had lunch on the grass, under the willow-trees, quite close to the water, which glittered in the sun's rays. The air was balmy, charged with odors of fresh vegetation; they had drunk the most delicious wines. How pleasant everything was on that day!

After lunch, Saudres went to sleep on the broad of his back, "The best nap he had in his life," said he, when he woke up.

Madame Saudres had taken the arm of Savel, and they had started to walk along the river's bank.

She leaned tenderly on his arm. She laughed and said to him: "I am intoxicated, my friend, I am quite intoxicated." He looked at her, his heart beating rapidly. He felt himself grow pale, hoping that he had not looked too boldly at her, and that the trembling of his hands had not revealed his passion.

She had decked her head with wild flowers and water-lilies, and she had asked him: "Do you not like to see me appear thus?"

As he did not answer—for he could find nothing to say, he should rather have gone down on his knees—she burst out laughing, a sort of discontented laughter which she threw straight in his face, saying: "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least speak!"

He felt like crying, and could not even yet find a word to say.

All these things came back to him now, as vividly as on the day when they took place. Why had she said this to him, "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least speak!"

And he recalled how tenderly she had leaned on his arm. And in passing under a shady tree he had felt her ear leaning against his cheek, and he had tilted his head abruptly, for fear that she had not meant to bring their flesh into contact.

When he had said to her: "Is it not time to return?" she darted at him a singular look. "Certainly," she said, "certainly," regarding him at the same time, in a curious manner. He had not thought of anything then; and now the whole thing appeared to him quite plain.

"Just as you like, my friend. If you are tired let us go back."

And he answered:

"It is not that I am fatigued; but Saudres has perhaps waked up now."

And she had said: "If you are afraid of my husband's being awake, that is another thing. Let us return."

In returning she remained silent and leaned no longer on his arm. Why?

At this time it had never occurred to him to ask himself, "Why." Now he seemed to apprehend something that he had not then understood.

What was it?

M. Savel felt himself blush, and he got up at a bound, feeling thirty years younger, believing that he now understood Madame Saudres then to say, "I love you."

Was it possible? That suspicion

which had just entered into his soul, tortured him. Was it possible that he could not have seen, not have dreamed?

Oh! if that could be true, if he had rubbed against such good fortune without laying hold of it!

He said to himself: "I wish to know. I cannot remain in this state of doubt. I wish to know!" He put on his clothes quickly, dressed in hot haste. He thought: "I am sixty-two years of age, she is fifty-eight; I may ask her that now without giving offense."

He started out.

The Saudres' house was situated on the other side of the street, almost directly opposite his own. He went up to it, knocked, and a little servant came to open the door.

"You there at this hour, M. Savel? Has some accident happened to you?"

M. Savel responded:

"No, my girl; but go and tell your mistress that I want to speak to her at once."

"The fact is, Madame is preparing her stock of pear-jams for the winter, and she is standing in front of the fire. She is not dressed, as you may well understand."

"Yes, but go and tell her that I wish to see her on an important matter."

The little servant went away and Savel began to walk, with long, nervous strides, up and down the drawing-room. He did not feel himself the least embarrassed, however. Oh! he was merely going to ask her something, as he would have asked her about some cooking receipt, and that was: "Do you know that I am sixty-two years of age?"

The door opened and Madame ap-

peared. She was now a gross woman, fat and round, with full cheeks, and a sonorous laugh. She walked with her arms away from her body, and her sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, her bare arms all smeared with sugar juice. She asked, anxiously:

"What is the matter with you, my friend; you are not ill, are you?"

"No, my dear friend; but I wish to ask you one thing, which to me is of the first importance, something which is torturing my heart, and I want you to promise that you will answer me candidly."

She laughed, "I am always candid. Say on."

"Well, then. I have loved you from the first day I ever saw you. Can you have any doubt of this?"

She responded laughing, with something of her former tone of voice:

"Great goose! what ails you? I knew it well from the very first day!"

Savel began to tremble. He stammered out: "You knew it? Then—"

He stopped.

She asked:

"Then? What?"

He answered:

"Then—what would you think?—what—what—what would you have answered?"

She broke forth into a peal of laughter, which made the sugar juice run off the tips of her fingers on to the carpet.

"I? But you did not ask me anything. It was not for me to make a declaration."

He then advanced a step toward her.

"Tell me—tell me— You remember the day when Saudres went to sleep

on the grass after lunch—when we had walked together as far as the bend of the river, below—”

He waited, expectantly. She had ceased to laugh, and looked at him, straight in the eyes.

“Yes, certainly. I remember it.”

He answered, shivering all over.

“Well,—that day—if I had been—if I had been—enterprising—what would you have done?”

She began to laugh as only a happy woman can laugh, who has nothing to regret, and responded frankly, in a voice tinged with irony:

“I would have yielded, my friend.”

She then turned on her heels and went back to her jam-making.

Savel rushed into the street, cast down, as though he had encountered some great disaster. He walked with giant strides, through the rain, straight on, until he reached the river, without thinking where he was going. When he reached the bank he turned to the right and followed it. He walked a long time, as if urged on by some instinct. His clothes were running with water, his hat was crushed in, as soft as a piece of rag and dripping like a thatched roof. He walked on, straight in front of him. At last, he came to the place where they had lunched so long, long ago, the recollection of which had tortured his heart. He sat down under the leafless trees, and wept.

The Deaf-Mute

MY DEAR friend, you ask me why I do not return to Paris; you will be astonished, and almost angry, I suppose, when I give you the reason, which will without doubt be revolting to you: “Why should a hunter return to Paris at the height of the woodcock season?”

Certainly I understand and like life in the city very well, that life which leads from the chamber to the sidewalk; but I prefer a freer life, the rude life of the hunter in autumn.

In Paris, it seems to me that I am never out of doors; for, in fact, the streets are only great, common apartments without a ceiling. Is one in the air between two walls, his feet upon stone or wooden pavement, his view shut in everywhere by buildings, without any

horizon of verdure, fields, or woods? Thousands of neighbors jostle you, push you, salute you, and talk with you; but the fact of receiving water upon an umbrella when it rains is not sufficient to give me the impression or the sensation of space.

Here, I perceive clearly and deliciously the difference between in doors and out. But it was not of that that I wish to speak to you.

Well, then, the woodcock are flying.

And it is necessary to tell you that I live in a great Norman house, in a valley, near a little river, and that I hunt nearly every day.

Other days, I read; I even read things that men in Paris have not the time to become acquainted with; very serious

things, very profound, very curious, written by a brave, scholarly genius, a foreigner who has spent his life studying the subject and observing the facts relative to the influence of the functions of our organs upon our intelligence.

But I was speaking to you of woodcock.

My two friends, the D'Orgemol brothers, and myself remain here during the hunting season awaiting the first frost. Then, when it freezes, we set out for their farm in Cannelot, near Fécamp, because there is a delicious little wood there, a divine wood, where every woodcock that flies comes to lodge.

You know the D'Orgemols, those two giants, those Normans of ancient times, those two males of the old, powerful conquering race which invaded France, took England and kept it, established itself on every coast of the world, made towns everywhere, passed like a flood over Sicily, creating there an admirable art, struck down kings, pillaged the proudest cities, matched popes in their priestly tricks and ridiculed them, more sly than the Italian pontiffs themselves, and above all, left children in all the beds of the world. These D'Orgemols are two Normans of the best stamp, and are all Norman — voice, accent, mind, blond hair, and eyes which are the color of the sea.

When we are together we talk the patois, we live, think, and act in Norman, we become Norman landowners, more peasants than farmers.

For two weeks now, we have been waiting for woodcock. Every morning, Simon, the elder, will say: "Hey! Here's the wind coming round to the

east, and it's going to freeze. In two days they will be here."

The younger, Gaspard, more exact, waits for the frost to come before he announces it.

But, last Thursday he entered my room at dawn, crying out:

"It has come! The earth is all white. Two days more and we shall go to Cannelot."

Two days later, in fact, we do set out for Cannelot. Certainly you would have laughed to see us. We take our places in a strange sort of hunting wagon that my father had constructed long ago. Constructed is the only word that I can use in speaking of this monstrous carriage, or rather this earthquake on wheels. There was room for everything inside: a place for provisions, a place for the guns, place for the trunks, and places of clear space for the dogs. Everything is sheltered except the men, perched on seats as high as a third story, and all this supported by four gigantic wheels. One mounted as best he could, making his feet, hands, and even his teeth serve him for the occasion, for there was no step to give access to the edifice.

Now, the two D'Orgemols and myself scaled this mountain, clothed like Laplanders. We have on sheepskins, wear enormous, woolen stockings outside our pantaloons, and gaiters outside our woolen stockings; we also have some black fur caps and white fur gloves. When we are installed, John, my servant, throws us our three terriers, Pif, Paf, and Moustache. Pif belongs to Simon, Paf to Gaspard, and Moustache to me. They look like three crocodiles covered with hair. They are long, low,

and crooked, with bent legs, and so hairy that they have the look of a yellow thicket. Their eyes can scarcely be seen under their eyebrows, or their teeth through their beards. One could never shut them into the rolling kennels of the carriage. Each one puts his own dog under his feet to keep him warm.

And now we are off, shivering abominably. It is cold, and freezing hard. We are contented. Toward five o'clock we arrive. The farmer, master Picot, is expecting us, waiting before the door. He is also a jolly fellow, not tall, but round, squat, vigorous as a bulldog, sly as a fox, always laughing, always contented, knowing how to make money out of all of us.

It is a great festival for him when the woodcock arrives. The farm is large, and on it an old building set in an apple orchard, surrounded by four rows of beech-trees, which battle against the winds from the sea all the year.

We enter the kitchen where a bright fire is burning in our honor. Our table is set against the high chimney, where a large chicken is turning and roasting before the clear flame, and whose gravy is running into an earthen dish beneath.

The farmer's wife salutes us, a tall, quiet woman, wholly occupied with the cares of her house, her head full of accounts, the price of grain, of poultry, of mutton, and beef. She is an orderly woman, set and severe, known for her worth in the neighborhood.

At the end of the kitchen is set the long table where all the farm hands, drivers, laborers, stableboys, shepherds, and woman servants sit down. They eat in silence under the active eye of the mistress, watching us dine with master

Picot, who says witty things to make us laugh. Then, when all her servants are fed, Madame Picot takes her repast alone at one corner of the table, a rapid and frugal repast, watching the serving maid meanwhile. On ordinary days she dines with all the rest.

We all three sleep, the D'Orgemols and myself, in a bare, white room, white-washed with lime, containing only our three beds, three chairs, and three basins.

Gaspard always wakes first and sounds the echoing watchword. In half an hour everybody is ready, and we set out with master Picot who hunts with us.

Mr. Picot prefers me to his masters. Why? Without doubt because I am not his master. So we two reach the woods by the right, while the two brothers come to the attack by the left. Simon has the care of the dogs, all three attached to the end of a rope.

For we are not hunting woodcock but the wolf. We are convinced that it is better to find the woodcock than to seek it. If one falls upon one and kills it, there you are! But when one specially wishes to meet one, he can never quite bring him down. It is truly a beautiful and curious thing, hearing the loud report of a gun, in the fresh morning air, and then, the formidable voice of Gaspard filling the space as he howls:

"Woodcock— There it is."

As for me, I am sly. When I have killed a woodcock, I cry out: "Wolf!" And then I triumph in my success when we go to a clear place for the midday lunch.

Here we are then, master Picot and I, in the little woods, where the leaves fall

with a sweet and continued murmur, with a dry murmur, a little sad, for they are dead. It is cold, a light cold which stings the eyes, the nose, and the ears, and powders with a fine, white moss the limbs of the trees and the brown, plowed earth. But there is warmth through all our limbs under the great sheepskin. The sun is gay in the blue air which it warms scarcely at all, but it is gay. It is good to hunt in the woods on fresh mornings in winter.

Down below, a dog is loudly baying. It is Pif. I know his thin voice, but it ceases. Then there is another cry, and then another; and Paf in his turn begins to bark. And what has become of Moustache? Ah! there is a little cry like that of a chicken being strangled! They have stirred up a wolf. Attention, master Picot!

They separate, then approach each other, scatter again, and then return; we follow their unforeseen windings, coming out into little roads, the mind on the alert, finger on the trigger of the gun.

They turn toward the fields again, and we turn also. Suddenly, there is a gray spot, a shadow, crossing the bypath. I aim and fire. The light smoke rises in the blue air and I perceive under a bush a bit of white hair which moves. Then I shout, with all my force, "Wolf, wolf! There he is!" And I show him to the three dogs, the three hairy crocodiles, who thank me by wagging their tails. Then they go off in search of another.

Master Picot joins me. Moustache begins to yap. The farmer says: "There must be a hare there at the edge of the field."

The moment that I came out of the

woods, I perceived, not ten steps from me, enveloped in his immense yellowish mantle and wearing his knitted, woolen cap such as shepherds wear at home, master Picot's herdsman Gargan, the deaf-mute. I said "Good morning," to him, according to our custom, and he raised his hand to salute me. He had not heard my voice, but had seen the motion of my lips.

For fifteen years I had known this shepherd. For fifteen years I had seen him each autumn, on the border, or in the middle of the field, his body motionless, and always knitting in his hands. His flock followed him like a pack of hounds, seeming to obey his eye.

Master Picot now took me by the arm, saying:

"Did you know that the shepherd killed his wife?"

I was stupefied. "What Gargan—the deaf-mute?"

"Yes, this winter, and his case was tried at Rouen. I will tell you about it."

And he led me into the underbrush, for the shepherd knew how to catch words from his master's lips, as if he heard them spoken. He could understand only him; but, watching his face closely, he was no longer deaf; and the master, on the other hand, seemed to divine, like a sorcerer, the meaning of all the mute's pantomime, the gestures of his fingers, the expression of his face, and the motion of his eyes.

Here is his simple story, the various, somber facts as they came to pass:

Gargan was the son of a marl digger, one of those men who go down into the marlpit to extract that kind of soft, dis-

solving stone, sown under the soil. A deaf-mute by birth, he had been brought up to watch the cows along the ditches by the side of the roads.

Then, picked up by Picot's father, he had become the shepherd on his farm. He was an excellent shepherd, devout, upright, knowing how to find the lost members of his flock, although nobody had taught him anything.

When Picot took the farm, in his turn, Gargan was thirty years old and looked forty. He was tall, thin, and bearded—bearded like a patriarch.

About this time a good woman of the country, Mrs. Martel, died very poor, leaving a girl fifteen years old who was called "Drops," because of her immoderate love for brandy.

Picot took in this ragged waif, employed her in light duties, giving her a home without pay in return for her work. She slept under the barn, in the stable, or the cow-house, upon straw, or on the manure-heap, anywhere, it mattered not where, for they could not give a bed to this barefoot. She slept, then, no matter where, with no matter whom, perhaps with the plowman or the stable boy. But it happened soon that she gave her attention to the deaf-mute and coupled herself with him in a continued fashion. What united these two miserable beings? How have they understood each other? Had he ever known a woman before this barn rover, he who had never talked with anyone? Was it she who found him in his wheeled hut and seduced him, like an Eve of the rut, at the edge of the road? No one knows. They only know that one day they were living together as husband and wife.

No one was astonished by it, and

Picot found it a very natural coupling. But the curate heard of this union without a mass and was angry. He reproached Mrs. Picot, disturbed her conscience, and threatened her with mysterious punishments. What was to be done? It was very simple. They must go and be married at the church and at the mayor's. They had nothing, either one of them: he, not a whole pair of pantaloons, she, not a petticoat of a single kind of cloth. So there was nothing to oppose what the law and religion required. They were united, in an hour, before the mayor and the curate, and believed that all was regulated for the best.

Now, it soon became a joke in the country (pardon the villainous word) to make a deceived husband of this poor Gargan. Before she was married, no one thought of sleeping with "Drops," but now each one wished his turn, for the sake of a laughable story. Everybody went there for a little glass behind the husband's back. The affair made so much noise that even some of the Goderville gentlemen came to see her.

For a half pint "Drops" would finish the spectacle with no matter whom, in a ditch, behind a wall, anywhere, while the silhouette of the motionless Gargan could be seen knitting a stocking not a hundred feet from there, surrounded by his bleating flock. And they laughed about it enough to make themselves ill in all the *cafés* of the country. It was the only thing talked of in the evening before the fire; and upon the road, the first thing one would ask:—"Have you paid your drop to 'Drops'?" Everyone knew what that meant.

The shepherd never seemed to see

anything. But one day the Poirot boy, of Sasseville, called to Gargan's wife from behind the mill, showing her a full bottle. She understood and ran to him laughing. Now, scarcely were they engaged in their criminal deed when the herdsman fell upon them as if he had come out of a cloud. Poirot fled at full speed, his breeches about his heels, while the deaf-mute, with the cry of a beast, sprang at his wife's throat.

The people working in the fields ran toward them. It was too late; her tongue was black, her eyes were coming out of her head, the blood was flowing from her nose. She was dead.

The shepherd was tried by the Judge at Rouen. As he was a mute, Picot served as interpreter. The details of the affair amused the audience very much. But the farmer had but one idea: his herdsman must be acquitted. And he went about it in earnest.

At first, he related the deaf-mute's whole story, including that of his marriage; then, when he came to the crime, he himself questioned the assassin.

The assemblage was very quiet.

Picot pronounced the words slowly: "Did you know that she had deceived you?" and at the same time he asked the question with his eyes in pantomime.

The other answered "No" with his head.

"Were you asleep in the mill when you surprised her?" And he made a gesture of a man seeing some disgusting thing.

The other answered "Yes" with his head.

Then the farmer, imitating the signs of the mayor who married them, and of the priest who united them in the name

of God, asked his servant if he had killed his wife because she was bound to him before men and before heaven.

The shepherd answered "Yes" with his head.

Picot then said to him: "Come, tell us how it happened."

Then the deaf-mute reproduced the whole scene in pantomime. He showed how he was asleep in the mill; that he was awakened by feeling the straw move; that he had watched quietly and had seen the whole thing.

He rose, between the two policemen, and brusquely imitated the obscene movement of the criminal couple entangled before him.

A tumultuous laugh went through the hall, then stopped short; for the herdsman, with haggard eyes, moving his jaw and his great beard as if he had bitten something, with arms extended, and head thrown forward, repeated the terrible action of a murderer who strangles a being.

And he howled frightfully, so excited with anger that one would think he believed he still held her in his grasp; and the policemen were obliged to seize him and seat him by force in order to calm him.

A great shiver of agony ran through the assembly. Then master Picot, placing his hand upon his servant's shoulder, said simply: "He knows what honor is, this man does."

And the shepherd was acquitted.

As for me, my dear friend, I listened to this adventure to its close, much moved, and have related it to you in gross terms in order not to change the farmer's story. But now there is a report of a gun from the woods, and the

formidable voice of Gaspard is heard growling in the wind, like the sound of a cannon:

"Woodcock! There is one."

And this is how I employ my time, watching for the woodcock to pass, while you are also going to the Bois to see the first winter costumes.

Magnetism

IT WAS at the close of a dinner-party of men, at the hour of endless cigars and incessant sips of brandy, amid the smoke and the torpid warmth of digestion, and the slight confusion of heads generated by such a quantity of eatables and by the absorption of so many different liquors.

Those present were talking about magnetism, about Donato's tricks, and about Doctor Charcot's experiences. All of a sudden, those men, so sceptical, so happy-go-lucky, so indifferent to religion of every sort, began telling stories about strange occurrences, incredible things which nevertheless had really happened, they contended, falling back into superstitions, beliefs, clinging to these last remnants of the marvelous, becoming devotees to this mystery of magnetism, defending it in the name of science. There was only one person who smiled, a vigorous young fellow, a great pursuer of girls of light behavior, and a hunter also of frisky matrons, in whose mind there was so much incredulity about everything that he would not even enter upon a discussion of such matters.

He repeated with a sneer:

"Humbug! humbug! humbug! We need not discuss Donato, who is merely a very smart juggler. As for M. Char-

cot, who is said to be a remarkable man of science, he produces on me the effect of those story-tellers of the school of Edgar Allan Poe, who go mad through constantly reflecting on queer cases of insanity. He has set forth some nervous phenomena, which are unexplained and inexplicable; he makes his way into that unknown region which men explore every day, and not being able to comprehend what he sees, he remembers perhaps too well the explanations of certain mysteries given by priests. Besides, I would like to hear him speaking on these subjects; that would be quite a different thing from your repetition of what he says."

The words of the unbeliever were listened to with a kind of pity, as if he had blasphemed in the midst of an assembly of monks.

One of these gentlemen exclaimed:

"And yet miracles were performed in former days."

But the other replied: "I deny it. Why cannot they be performed any longer?"

Thereupon, each man referred to some fact, or some fantastic presentiment, or some instance of souls communicating with each other across space, or some use of secret influences produced by one being or another. And they asserted, they

maintained, that these things had actually occurred, while the sceptic went on repeating energetically: "Humbug! humbug! humbug!"

At last he rose up, threw away his cigar, and with his hands in his pockets said: "Well, I, too, am going to relate to you two stories, and then I will explain them to you. Here they are:

"In the little village of Etretat, the men, who are all seafaring folk, go every year to Newfoundland to fish for cod. Now, one night the little son of one of these fishermen woke up with a start, crying out that his father was dead. The child was quieted, and again he woke up exclaiming that his father was drowned. A month later the news came that his father had, in fact, been swept off the deck of his smack by a billow. The widow then remembered how her son had awaked and spoken of his father's death. Everyone said it was a miracle, and the affair caused a great sensation. The dates were compared, and it was found that the accident and the dream had very nearly coincided, whence they drew the conclusion that they had happened on the same night and at the same hour. And there is the mystery of magnetism."

The story-teller stopped suddenly.

Thereupon, one of those who had heard him much affected by the narrative, asked:

"And can you explain this?"

"Perfectly, Monsieur. I have discovered the secret. The circumstance surprised me and even embarrassed me very much; but I, you see, do not believe on principle. Just as others begin by believing, I begin by doubting; and when I don't at all understand, I con-

tinue to deny that there can be any telegraphic communication between souls, certain that my own sagacity will be enough to explain it. Well, I have gone on inquiring into the matter, and I have ended, by dint of questioning all the wives of the absent seamen, in convincing myself that not a week passes without one of themselves or their children dreaming and declaring when they wake that the father was drowned. The horrible and continual fear of this accident makes them always talk about it. Now, if one of these frequent predictions coincides, by a very simple chance, with the death of the person referred to, people at once declare it to be a miracle; for they suddenly lose sight of all the other predictions of misfortune that have remained unconfirmed. I have myself known fifty cases where the persons who made the prediction forgot all about it in a week afterward. But if, in fact, the man was dead, then the recollection of the thing immediately revived, and people will be ready to believe in the intervention of God, according to some, and in magnetism, according to others."

One of the smokers remarked:

"What you say is right enough; but what about your second story?"

"Oh! my second story is a very delicate matter to relate. It is to myself it happened, and so I don't place any great value on my own view of the matter. One is never a good judge in a case where he is one of the parties concerned. At any rate, here it is:

"Among my acquaintances in society there was a young woman on whom I had never bestowed a thought, whom I had never even looked at attentively,

never taken any notice of, as the saying is.

"I classed her among the women of no importance, though she was not quite bad-looking; in fact, she appeared to me to possess eyes, a nose, a mouth, some sort of hair—just a colorless type of countenance. She was one of those beings on whom one only thinks by accident, without taking any particular interest in the individual, and who never excites desire.

"Well, one night, as I was writing some letters by my own fireside before going to bed, I was conscious, in the midst of that train of sensual images that sometimes float before one's brain in moments of idle reverie, while I held the pen in my hand, of a kind of light breath passing into my soul, a little shudder of the heart and immediately, without reason, without any logical connection of thought, I saw distinctly, saw as if I had touched her, saw from head to foot, uncovered, this young woman for whom I had never cared save in the most superficial manner when her name happened to recur to my mind. And all of a sudden I discovered in her a heap of qualities which I had never before observed, a sweet charm, a fascination that made me languish; she awakened in me that sort of amorous uneasiness which sends you in pursuit of a woman. But I did not remain thinking of her long. I went to bed and was soon asleep. And I dreamed.

"You have all had these strange dreams which render you masters of the impossible, which open to you doors that cannot be passed through, unexpected joys, impenetrable arms!

"Which of us in these agitated, excit-

ing palpitating slumbers, has not held, clasped, embraced, possessed with an extraordinary acuteness of sensation, the woman with whom our minds were occupied? And have you ever noticed what superhuman delight these good fortunes of dreams bestow upon us? Into what mad intoxication they cast you! With what passionate spasms they shake you! With what infinite, caressing, penetrating tenderness they fill your heart for her whom you hold fainting and hot in that adorable and sensual illusion which seems so like reality!

"All this I felt with unforgettable violence. This woman was mine, so much mine that the pleasant warmth of her skin remained between my fingers, the odor of her skin remained in my brain, the taste of her kisses remained on my lips, the sound of her voice lingered in my ears, the touch of her clasp still clung to my side, and the burning charm of her tenderness still gratified my senses long after my exquisite but disappointing awakening.

"And three times the same night I had a renewal of my dream.

"When the day dawned, she beset me, possessed me, haunted my brain and my flesh to such an extent that I no longer remained one second without thinking of her.

"At last, not knowing what to do, I dressed myself and went to see her. As I went up the stairs to her apartment, I was so much overcome by emotion that I trembled and my heart panted; I was seized with vehement desire from head to foot.

"I entered the apartment. She rose up the moment she heard my name pro-

nounced; and suddenly our eyes met in a fixed look of astonishment.

"I sat down.

"I uttered in a faltering tone some common-places which she seemed not to hear. I did not know what to say or to do. Then, abruptly, I flung myself upon her, seizing her with both arms; and my entire dream was accomplished so quickly, so easily, so madly, that I suddenly began to doubt whether I was really awake. She was, after this, my mistress for two years."

"What conclusion do you draw from it?" said a voice.

The story-teller seemed to hesitate.

"The conclusion I draw from it—well, by Jove, the conclusion is that it was just a coincidence! And, in the next place, who can tell? Perhaps it was some glance of hers which I had not noticed and which came back that night to me—one of those mysterious and unconscious evocations of memory which often bring before us things ignored by our own consciousness, unperceived by our minds!"

"Let that be just as you wish it," said one of his table-companions, when the story was finished, "but if you don't believe in magnetism after that, you are an ungrateful fellow, my dear boy!"

In Various Rôles

IN the following reminiscences will frequently be mentioned a lady who played a great part in the annals of the police from 1848 to 1866. We will call her "Wanda von Chabert." Born in Galicia of German parents, and carefully brought up in every way, when only sixteen she married, from love, a rich and handsome officer of noble birth. The young couple, however, lived beyond their means; and when the husband died suddenly, two years after they were married, she was left anything but well off.

As Wanda had grown accustomed to luxury and amusement, a quiet life in her parents' house did not suit her any longer. Even while she was still in mourning for her husband, she allowed a Hungarian magnate to make love to her. She went off with him at a venture,

and continued the same extravagant life which she had led when her husband was alive, of her own volition. At the end of two years, however, her lover left her in a town in North Italy, almost without means. She was thinking of going on the stage, when chance provided her with another resource, which enabled her to reassert her position in society. She became a secret police agent, and soon was one of their most valuable members. In addition to the proverbial charm and wit of a Polish woman, she also possessed high linguistic attainments, and spoke Polish, Russian, French, German, English, and Italian, with almost equal fluency and correctness. Then she had that encyclopedic polish which impresses people much more than the most profound learning of the specialist. She was very

attractive in appearance, and she knew how to set off her good looks by all the arts of dress and coquetry.

In addition to this, she was a woman of the world in the widest sense of the term; pleasure-loving, faithless, unstable; and therefore never in any danger of really losing her heart, and consequently her head. She used to change the place of her abode, according to what she had to do. Sometimes she lived in Paris among the Polish emigrants, in order to find out what they were doing, and maintained intimate relations with the Tuileries and the Palais Royal at the same time; sometimes she went to London for a short time, or hurried off to Italy to watch the Hungarian exiles, only to reappear suddenly in Switzerland, or at one of the fashionable German watering-places.

In revolutionary circles, she was looked upon as an active member of the great League of Freedom, and diplomats regarded her as an influential friend of Napoleon III.

She knew everyone, but especially those men whose names were to be met with every day in the journals, and she counted Victor Emmanuel, Rouher, Gladstone, and Gortschakoff among her friends as well as Mazzini, Kossuth, Garibaldi, Mieroslawsky, and Bakunin.

In the spring of 185— she was at Vevey on the lovely lake of Geneva, and went into raptures when talking to an old German diplomatist about the beauties of nature, and about Calame, Stifter, and Turgenev, whose "Diary of a Hunter," had just become fashionable. One day a man appeared at the *table d'hôte*, who excited unusual attention, and hers especially, so that there was

nothing strange in her asking the proprietor of the hotel what his name was. She was told that he was a wealthy Brazilian, and that his name was Don Escovedo.

Whether it was an accident, or whether he responded to the interest which the young woman felt for him, at any rate she constantly met him wherever she went, whether taking a walk, or on the lake or looking at the newspapers in the reading-room. At last she was obliged to confess to herself that he was the handsomest man she had ever seen. Tall, slim, and yet muscular, the young, beardless Brazilian had a head which any woman might envy, features not only beautiful and noble, but also extremely delicate, dark eyes which possessed a wonderful charm, and thick, auburn, curly hair, which completed the attractiveness and the strangeness of his appearance.

They soon became acquainted, through a Prussian officer whom the Brazilian had asked for an introduction to the beautiful Polish lady—for Frau von Chabert was taken for one in Vevey. She, cold and designing as she was, blushed when he stood before her for the first time; and when he gave her his arm, he could feel her hand tremble slightly on it. The same evening they went out riding together, the next he was lying at her feet, and on the third she was his. For four weeks the lovely Wanda and the Brazilian lived together as if they had been in Paradise, but he could not deceive her searching eyes any longer.

Her sharp and practiced eye had already discovered in him that indefinable something which makes a man appear a

suspicious character. Any other woman would have been pained and horrified at such a discovery, but she found the strange consolation in it that her handsome adorer promised also to become a very interesting object for pursuit, and so she began systematically to watch the man who lay unsuspectingly at her feet.

She soon found out that he was no conspirator; but she asked herself in vain whether she was to look for a common swindler, an impudent adventurer, or perhaps even a criminal in him. The day that she had foreseen soon came; the Brazilian's banker "unaccountably" had omitted to send him any money, and so he borrowed some of her. "So he is a male courtesan," she said to herself. The handsome man soon required money again, and she lent it to him again. Then at last he left suddenly and nobody knew where he had gone to; only this much, that he had left Vevey as the companion of an old but wealthy Wallachian lady. So this time clever Wanda was duped.

A year afterward she met the Brazilian unexpectedly at Lucca, with an insipid-looking, light-haired, thin Englishwoman on his arm. Wanda stood still and looked at him steadily; but he glanced at her quite indifferently; he did not choose to know her again.

The next morning, however, his valet brought her a letter from him, which contained the amount of his debt in Italian hundred-lire notes, accompanied by a very cool excuse. Wanda was satisfied, but she wished to find out who the lady was, in whose company she constantly saw Don Escovedo.

"Don Escovedo."

An Austrian count, who had a loud and silly laugh, said:

"Who has saddled you with that yarn? The lady is Lady Nitingsdale, and his name is Romanesco."

"Romanesco?"

"Yes, he is a rich Boyar from Moldavia, where he has extensive estates."

Romanesco ran a faro bank in his apartments, and certainly cheated, for he nearly always won; it was not long, therefore, before other people in good society at Lucca shared Madame von Chabert's suspicions, and, consequently, Romanesco thought it advisable to vanish as suddenly from Lucca as Escovedo had done from Vevey, and without leaving any more traces behind him.

Some time afterward, Madame von Chabert was on the island of Heligoland, for the sea-bathing; and one day she saw Escovedo-Romanesco sitting opposite to her at the *table d'hôte*, in very animated conversation with a Russian lady; only his hair had turned black since she had seen him last. Evidently his light hair had become too compromising for him.

"The sea-water seems to have a very remarkable effect upon your hair," Wanda said to him spitefully in a whisper.

"Do you think so?" he replied, condescendingly.

"I fancy that at one time your hair was fair."

"You are mistaking me for somebody else," the Brazilian replied, quietly.

"I am not."

"For whom do you take me, pray?" he said with an insolent smile.

"For Don Escovedo."

"I am Count Dembizki from Valkyria," the former Brazilian said with a bow; "perhaps you would like to see my passport."

"Well, perhaps—"

And he had the impudence to show her his false passport.

A year afterward Wanda met Count Dembizki in Baden, near Vienna. His hair was still black, but he had a magnificent, full, black beard; he had become a Greek prince, and his name was Anastasio Maurokordatos. She met him once in one of the side walks in the park, where he could not avoid her. "If it goes on like this," she called out to him in a mocking voice, "the next time I see you, you will be king of some negro tribe or other."

That time, however, the Brazilian did not deny his identity; on the contrary, he surrendered at discretion, and implored her not to betray him. As she was not revengeful she pardoned him, after enjoying his terror for a time, and promised him that she would hold her tongue, as long as he did nothing contrary to the laws.

"First of all, I must beg you not to gamble."

"You have only to command; and we do not know each other in the future."

"I must certainly insist on that," she said maliciously.

The "Exotic Prince" had, however, made a conquest of the charming daughter of a wealthy Austrian count, and had cut out an excellent young officer, who was wooing her. The latter, in his despair, began to make love to Frau von Chabert, and at last told her he loved her. But she only laughed at him.

"You are very cruel," he stammered in confusion.

"I? What are you thinking about?" Wanda replied, still smiling; "all I mean is that you have directed your love to the wrong address, for Countess—"

"Do not speak of her; she is engaged to another man."

"As long as I choose to permit it," she said; "but what will you do if I bring her back to your arms? Will you still call me cruel?"

"Can you do this?" the young officer asked, in great excitement.

"Well supposing I can do it, what shall I be then?"

"An angel, whom I shall thank on my knees."

A few days later, the rivals met at a coffee-house; the Greek prince began to lie and boast, and the Austrian officer gave him the lie direct. In consequence, it was arranged that they should fight a duel with pistols next morning in a wood close to Baden. But as the officer was leaving the house with his seconds the next morning, a Police Commissary came up to him and begged him not to trouble himself any further about the matter, but another time to be more careful before accepting a challenge.

"What does it mean?" the officer asked, in some surprise.

"It means that this Maurokordatos is a dangerous swindler and adventurer, whom we have just taken into custody."

"He is not a prince?"

"No; a circus rider."

An hour later, the officer received a letter from the charming Countess, in which she humbly begged for pardon.

The happy lover set off to go and see her immediately, but on the way a sudden thought struck him, and so he turned back in order to thank beautiful Wanda, as he had promised, on his knees.

The False Gems

M. LANTIN had met the young woman at a *soirée*, at the home of the assistant chief of his bureau, and at first sight had fallen madly in love with her.

She was the daughter of a country physician who had died some months previously. She had come to live in Paris, with her mother, who visited much among her acquaintances, in the hope of making a favorable marriage for her daughter. They were poor and honest, quiet and unaffected.

The young girl was a perfect type of the virtuous woman whom every sensible young man dreams of one day winning for life. Her simple beauty had the charm of angelic modesty, and the imperceptible smile which constantly hovered about her lips seemed to be the reflection of a pure and lovely soul. Her praises resounded on every side. People were never tired of saying: "Happy the man who wins her love! He could not find a better wife."

Now M. Lantin enjoyed a snug little income of \$700, and, thinking he could safely assume the responsibilities of matrimony, proposed to this model young girl and was accepted.

He was unspeakably happy with her; she governed his household so cleverly and economically that they seemed to live in luxury. She lavished the most delicate attentions on her husband,

coaxed and fondled him, and the charm of her presence was so great that six years after their marriage M. Lantin discovered that he loved his wife even more than during the first days of their honeymoon.

He only felt inclined to blame her for two things: her love of the theater, and a taste for false jewelry. Her friends (she was acquainted with some officers' wives) frequently procured for her a box at the theater, often for the first representations of the new plays; and her husband was obliged to accompany her, whether he willed or not, to these amusements, though they bored him excessively after a day's labor at the office.

After a time, M. Lantin begged his wife to get some lady of her acquaintance to accompany her. She was at first opposed to such an arrangement; but, after much persuasion on his part, she finally consented—to the infinite delight of her husband.

Now, with her love for the theater came also the desire to adorn her person. True, her costumes remained as before, simple, and in the most correct taste; but she soon began to ornament her ears with huge rhinestones which glittered and sparkled like real diamonds. Around her neck she wore strings of false pearls, and on her arms bracelets of imitation gold.

Her husband frequently remonstrated with her, saying:

"My dear, as you cannot afford to buy real diamonds, you ought to appear adorned with your beauty and modesty alone, which are the rarest ornaments of your sex."

But she would smile sweetly, and say:

"What can I do? I am so fond of jewelry. It is my only weakness. We cannot change our natures."

Then she would roll the pearl necklaces around her fingers, and hold up the bright gems for her husband's admiration, gently coaxing him:

"Look! are they not lovely? One would swear they were real."

M. Lantin would then answer, smilingly:

"You have Bohemian tastes, my dear."

Often of an evening, when they were enjoying a tête-a-tête by the fireside, she would place on the tea table the leather box containing the "trash," as M. Lantin called it. She would examine the false gems with a passionate attention as though they were in some way connected with a deep and secret joy; and she often insisted on passing a necklace around her husband's neck, and laughing heartily would exclaim: "How droll you look!" Then she would throw herself into his arms and kiss him affectionately.

One evening in winter she attended the opera, and on her return was chilled through and through. The next morning she coughed, and eight days later she died of inflammation of the lungs.

M. Lantin's despair was so great that his hair became white in one month. He wept unceasingly; his heart was torn

with grief, and his mind was haunted by the remembrance, the smile, the voice—by every charm of his beautiful, dead wife.

Time, the healer, did not assuage his grief. Often during office hours, while his colleagues were discussing the topics of the day, his eyes would suddenly fill with tears, and he would give vent to his grief in heartrending sobs. Everything in his wife's room remained as before her decease; and here he was wont to seclude himself daily and think of her who had been his treasure—the joy of his existence.

But life soon became a struggle. His income, which in the hands of his wife had covered all household expenses, was now no longer sufficient for his own immediate wants; and he wondered how she could have managed to buy such excellent wines, and such rare delicacies, things which he could no longer procure with his modest resources.

He incurred some debts and was soon reduced to absolute poverty. One morning, finding himself without a cent in his pocket, he resolved to sell something, and, immediately, the thought occurred to him of disposing of his wife's paste jewels. He cherished in his heart a sort of rancor against the false gems. They had always irritated him in the past, and the very sight of them spoiled somewhat the memory of his lost darling.

To the last days of her life, she had continued to make purchases; bringing home new gems almost every evening. He decided to sell the heavy necklace which she seemed to prefer, and which, he thought, ought to be worth about six or seven francs; for although paste it

was nevertheless, of very fine workmanship.

He put it in his pocket and started out in search of a jeweler's shop. He entered the first one he saw; feeling a little ashamed to expose his misery, and also to offer such a worthless article for sale.

"Sir," said he to the merchant, "I would like to know what this is worth."

The man took his necklace, examined it, called his clerk and made some remarks in an undertone; then he put the ornament back on the counter, and looked at it from a distance to judge of the effect.

M. Lantin was annoyed by all this detail and was on the point of saying: "Oh! I know well enough it is not worth anything," when the jeweler said: "Sir, that necklace is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand francs; but I could not buy it unless you tell me now whence it comes."

The widower opened his eyes wide and remained gaping, not comprehending the merchant's meaning. Finally he stammered: "You say—are you sure?" The other replied dryly: "You can search elsewhere and see if anyone will offer you more. I consider it worth fifteen thousand at the most. Come back here if you cannot do better."

M. Lantin, beside himself with astonishment, took up the necklace and left the store. He wished time for reflection.

Once outside, he felt inclined to laugh, and said to himself: "The fool! Had I only taken him at his word! That jeweler cannot distinguish real diamonds from paste."

A few minutes after, he entered

another store in the Rue de la Paix. As soon as the proprietor glanced at the necklace, he cried out:

"Ah, *parbleu!* I know it well; it was bought here."

M. Lantin was disturbed, and asked:

"How much is it worth?"

"Well, I sold it for twenty thousand francs. I am willing to take it back for eighteen thousand when you inform me, according to our legal formality, how it comes to be in your possession."

This time M. Lantin was dumfounded. He replied:

"But—but—examine it well. Until this moment I was under the impression that it was paste."

Said the jeweler:

"What is your name, sir?"

"Lantin—I am in the employ of the Minister of the Interior. I live at No. 16 Rue des Martyrs."

The merchant looked through his books, found the entry, and said: "That necklace was sent to Mme. Lantin's address, 16 Rue des Martyrs, July 20, 1876."

The two men looked into each other's eyes—the widower speechless with astonishment, the jeweler scenting a thief. The latter broke the silence by saying:

"Will you leave this necklace here for twenty-four hours? I will give you a receipt."

"Certainly," answered M. Lantin, hastily. Then, putting the ticket in his pocket, he left the store.

He wandered aimlessly through the streets, his mind in a state of dreadful confusion. He tried to reason, to understand. He could not afford to purchase such a costly ornament. Certainly

not. But, then, it must have been a present!—a present!—a present from whom? Why was it given her?

He stopped and remained standing in the middle of the street. A horrible doubt entered his mind—she? Then all the other gems must have been presents, too! The earth seemed to tremble beneath him,—the tree before him was falling—throwing up his arms, he fell to the ground, unconscious. He recovered his senses in a pharmacy into which the passers-by had taken him, and was then taken to his home. When he arrived he shut himself up in his room and wept until nightfall. Finally, overcome with fatigue, he threw himself on the bed, where he passed an uneasy, restless night.

The following morning he arose and prepared to go to the office. It was hard to work after such a shock. He sent a letter to his employer requesting to be excused. Then he remembered that he had to return to the jeweler's. He did not like the idea; but he could not leave the necklace with that man. So he dressed and went out.

It was a lovely day; a clear blue sky smiled on the busy city below, and men of leisure were strolling about with their hands in their pockets.

Observing them, M. Lantin said to himself: "The rich, indeed, are happy. With money it is possible to forget even the deepest sorrow. One can go where one pleases, and in travel find that distraction which is the surest cure for grief. Oh! if I were only rich!"

He began to feel hungry, but his pocket was empty. He again remembered the necklace. Eighteen thousand

francs! Eighteen thousand francs! What a sum!

He soon arrived in the Rue de la Paix, opposite the jeweler's. Eighteen thousand francs! Twenty times he resolved to go in, but shame kept him back. He was hungry, however,—very hungry, and had not a cent in his pocket. He decided quickly, ran across the street in order not to have time for reflection, and entered the store.

The proprietor immediately came forward, and politely offered him a chair; the clerks glanced at him knowingly.

"I have made inquiries, M. Lantin," said the jeweler, "and if you are still resolved to dispose of the gems, I am ready to pay you the price I offered."

"Certainly, sir," stammered M. Lantin.

Whereupon the proprietor took from a drawer eighteen large bills, counted and handed them to M. Lantin, who signed a receipt and with a trembling hand put the maney into his pocket.

As he was about to leave the store, he turned toward the merchant, who still wore the same knowing smile, and lowering his eyes, said:

"I have—I have other gems which I have received from the same source. Will you buy them also?"

The merchant bowed: "Certainly, sir."

M. Lantin said gravely: "I will bring them to you." An hour later he returned with the gems.

The large diamond earrings were worth twenty thousand francs; the bracelets thirty-five thousand; the rings, sixteen thousand; a set of emeralds and sapphires, fourteen thousand; a gold chain with solitaire pendant, forty

thousand—making the sum of one hundred and forty-three thousand francs.

The jeweler remarked, jokingly:

“There was a person who invested all her earnings in precious stones.”

M. Lantin replied, seriously:

“It is only another way of investing one’s money.”

That day he lunched at Voisin’s and drank wine worth twenty francs a bottle. Then he hired a carriage and made a tour of the Bois, and as he scanned the various turn-outs with a contemptuous air he could hardly refrain from crying out to the occupants:

“I, too, am rich!—I am worth two hundred thousand francs.”

Suddenly he thought of his employer. He drove up to the office, and entered gaily, saying:

“Sir, I have come to resign my position. I have just inherited three hundred thousand francs.”

He shook hands with his former colleagues and confided to them some of his projects for the future; then he went off to dine at the Café Anglais.

He seated himself beside a gentleman of aristocratic bearing, and during the meal informed the latter confidentially that he had just inherited a fortune of four hundred thousand francs.

For the first time in his life he was not bored at the theater, and spent the remainder of the night in a gay frolic.

Six months afterward he married again. His second wife was a very virtuous woman, with a violent temper. She caused him much sorrow.

Countess Satan

I.

THEY were discussing dynamite, the social revolution, Nihilism, and even those who cared least about politics had something to say. Some were alarmed, others philosophized, and others again tried to smile.

“Bah!” N—— said, “when we are all blown up, we shall see what it is like. Perhaps, after all, it may be an amusing sensation, provided one goes high enough.”

“But we shall not be blown up at all,” G——, the optimist, said, interrupting him. “It is all a romance.”

“You are mistaken, my dear fellow,” Jules de C—— replied. “It is like a

romance, but with this confounded Nihilism, everything is the same; it would be a mistake to trust to it. For instance, the manner in which I made Bakounine’s acquaintance—”

They knew that he was a good narrator, and it was no secret that his life had been an adventurous one, so they drew closer to him, and listened intently. This is what he told them:

II.

“I met Countess Nisoka W——, that strange woman who was usually called Countess Satan, in Naples. I immediately attached myself to her out of curiosity, and soon fell in love with her.

Not that she was beautiful, for she was a Russian with the bad characteristics of the Russian type. She was thin and squat at the same time, while her face was sallow and puffy, with high cheekbones and a Cossack's nose. But her conversation bewitched everyone.

"She was many-sided, learned, a philosopher, scientifically depraved, satanic. Perhaps the word is rather pretentious, but it exactly expresses what I want to say, for in other words she loved evil for the sake of evil. She rejoiced in other people's vices; she liked to sow the seed of evil, in order to see it flourish. And that, too, by fraud on an enormous scale. It was not enough for her to corrupt individuals, she only did that to keep her hand in; what she wished to do was to corrupt the masses. By slightly altering it after her own fashion, she might have used Caligula's famous wish. She also might have wished that the whole human race had but one head; not in order that she might cut it off, but that she might make the philosophy of Nihilism flourish there.

"What a temptation to become the lord and master of such a monster! I allowed myself to be tempted, and undertook the adventure. The means came unsought for by me, and the only thing that I had to do was to show myself more perverted and satanic than she was herself. And so I played the devil.

" 'Yes,' I said, 'we writers are the best workmen for doing evil, as our books may be bottles of poison. The so-called men of action only turn the handle of the *miltrailleuse* which we have loaded. Formulas will destroy the world, and it is we who invent them.'

" 'That is true,' said she, 'and that is what is wanting in Bakounine, I am sorry to say.'

"That name was constantly in her mouth. So I asked her for details, which she gave me, as she knew the man intimately.

" 'After all,' she said, with a contemptuous grimace, 'he is only a kind of Garibaldi.'

"She told me, although she made fun of him as she did so, about that 'Odyssey' of the barricades and of the hulks which made up Bakounine's history, and which is, nevertheless, the exact truth; about his adventures as chief of the insurgents at Prague and then at Dresden; of his first death sentence; about his imprisonment at Olmütz, in the casemates of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, and in a subterranean dungeon at Schüsselburg; about his exile to Siberia and his wonderful escape down the river harbour, on a Japanese coasting-vessel, and about his final arrival, by way of Yokohama and San Francisco, in London, whence he was directing all the operations of Nihilism.

" 'You see,' she said, 'he is a thorough adventurer, and now all his adventures are over. He got married at Tobolsk and became a mere respectable, middle-class man. And then he has no individual ideas. Herzen, the pamphleteer of "Kolokol," inspired him with the only fertile phrase that he ever uttered: "Land and Liberty!" But that is not yet the definite formula, the general formula—what I may call the dynamite formula. At best, Bakounine would only become an incendiary, and burn down cities. And what is that, I ask

you? Bah! A second-hand Rostoptchin! He wants a prompter, and I offered to become his, but he did not take me seriously.'

* * * * *

"It would be useless to enter into all the psychological details which marked the course of my passion for the Countess, and to explain to you more fully the curious and daily growing attraction which she had for me. It was getting exasperating, and the more so as she resisted me as stoutly as the shyest of innocents could have done. At the end of a month of mad Satanism, I saw what her game was. Do you know what she intended? She meant to make me Bakounine's prompter, or, at any rate, that is what she said. But no doubt she reserved the right to herself—at least that is how I understood her—to prompt the prompter, and my passion for her, which she purposely left unsatisfied, assured her that absolute power over me.

"All this may appear madness to you, but it is, nevertheless, the exact truth. In short, one morning she bluntly made the offer:

" 'Become Bakounine's soul, and you shall possess me.'

"Of course I accepted, for it was too fantastically strange to refuse. Don't you think so? What an adventure! What luck! A number of letters between the Countess and Bakounine prepared the way; I was introduced to him at his house, and they discussed me there. I became a sort of Western prophet, a mystic charmer who was ready to nihilize the Latin races, the Saint Paul of the new religion of nothingness, and at last a day was fixed for

us to meet in London. He lived in a small, one-storied house in Pimlico, with a tiny garden in front, and nothing noticeable about it.

"We were first of all shown into the commonplace parlor of all English homes, and then upstairs. The room where the Countess and I were left was small, and very badly furnished. It had a square table with writing materials on it, in the center of the room. This was his sanctuary. The deity soon appeared, and I saw him in flesh and bone—especially in flesh, for he was enormously stout. His broad face, with prominent cheek-bones, in spite of fat; a nose like a double funnel; and small, sharp eyes, which had a magnetic look, proclaimed the Tartar, the old Turanian blood which produced the Attilas, the Genghis-Khans, the Tamerlanes. The obesity which is characteristic of nomad races, who are always on horseback or driving, added to his Asiatic look. The man was certainly not a European, a slave, a descendant of the diestic Aryans, but a scion of the atheistic hordes who had several times already overrun Europe, and who, instead of ideas of progress, have Nihilism buried in their hearts.

"I was astonished, for I had not expected that the majesty of a whole race could be thus revived in a man, and my stupefaction increased after an hour's conversation. I could quite understand why such a Colossus had not wished for the Countess as his Egeria; she was a silly child to have dreamed of acting such a part to such a thinker. She had not felt the profoundness of that horrible philosophy which was hidden under his material activity, nor had she seen the

prophet under this hero of the barricades. Perhaps he had not thought it advisable to reveal himself to her; but he revealed himself to me, and inspired me with terror.

"A prophet? Oh! yes. He thought himself an Attila, and foresaw the consequences of his revolution; it was not only from instinct but also from theory that he urged a nation on to Nihilism. The phrase is not his, but Turgenieff's, I believe, but the idea certainly belonged to him. He got his programme of agricultural communism from Herzen, and his destructive radicalism from Pougatcheff, but he did not stop there. I mean that he went on to evil for the sake of evil. Herzen wished for the happiness of the Slav peasant; Pougatcheff wanted to be elected Emperor, but all that Bakounine wanted was to overthrow the actual order of things, no matter by what means, and to replace social concentration by a universal upheaval.

"It was the dream of a Tartar; it was true Nihilism pushed to extreme and practical conclusions. It was, in a word, the applied philosophy of chance, the indeterminate end of anarchy. Monstrous it may be, but grand in its monstrosity!

"And you must note that the typical man of action so despised by the Countess was, in Bakounine, the gigantic dreamer whom I have just shown to you. His dream did not remain a dream, but began to be realized. It was by the care of Bakounine that the Nihilistic party became an entity; a party

in which there is a little of everything, you know, but on the whole, a formidable party, the advanced guard of which is true Nihilism, whose object is nothing less than to destroy the Western world, to see it blossom from under the ruins of a general dispersion, the last conception of modern Tartarism.

"I never saw Bakounine again, for the Countess's conquest would have been too dearly bought by any attempt to act a comedy with this 'Old-Man-of-the-Mountain.' And besides that, after this visit, poor Countess Satan appeared to me quite silly. Her famous Satanism was nothing but the flicker of a spirit-lamp, after the general conflagration of which the other had dreamed. She had certainly shown herself very silly, when she could not understand that prodigious monster. And as she had seduced me only by her intellect and her perversity, I was disgusted as soon as she laid aside that mask. I left her without telling her of my intention, and never saw her again, either.

"No doubt they both took me for a spy from the 'Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery.' In that case, they must have thought me very clever to have escaped discovery, and all I have to do is to look out, lest any affiliated members of their society recognize me!"

Then he smiled and, turning to the waiter who had just come in, said: "Open another bottle of champagne, and make the cork pop! It will, at any rate, remind us of the day when we ourselves shall be blown up with dynamite."

A Useful House

ROYAUMONT'S fat sides shook with laughter at the mere recollection of the funny story that he had promised to his friends, and throwing himself back in the great armchair, which he completely filled, that confirmed gossip and busy-body, as they called him at the club, at last said:

"It is perfectly true. Bordenave does not owe anyone a penny and can go through any street he likes, and publish those famous memoirs of sheriff's officers, which he has been writing for the last ten years, when he did not dare to go out, and in which he carefully brought out the characters and peculiarities of all those generous distributors of stamped paper with whom he had had dealings—their tricks and wiles, their weaknesses, their jokes, their manner of performing their duties, sometimes with brutal rudeness and at others with cunning good nature, now embarrassed and almost ashamed of their work, and again ironically jovial; as well as the artifices of clerks to get a few crumbs from their employer's cake. The book will soon be published, and Machin, the 'Vaudeville' writer, has promised him a preface, so that it will be a most amusing work. You are surprised, eh? Confess that you are absolutely surprised, and I will lay you any bet you like that you will not guess how our excellent friend, whose existence is an inexplicable problem, has been able to settle with his creditors, and suddenly produce the requisite amount."

"Do get to the facts, confound it," Captain Hardeur said, who was growing tired of all this verbiage.

"All right, I will get to them as quick-

ly as possible," Royaumont replied, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fire. "I will clear my throat and begin. I suppose you all of you know that two better friends than Bordenave and Quillanet do not exist; neither of them could do without the other, and they have ended by dressing alike, by having the same gestures, the same laugh, the same walk, and the same inflections of voice, so that one would think that some close bond united them, and that they had been brought up together from childhood.

"There is, however, this difference between them, that Bordenave is completely ruined and that all that he possesses are bundles of mortgages, laughable parchments which attest his ancient race, and chimerical hopes of inheriting money some day, though these expectations are already heavily hypothecated. Consequently he is always on the lookout for some fresh expedient for raising money, though he is superbly indifferent about everything; while Sebastien Quillanet, of the banking house of Quillanet Brothers, must have an income of eight hundred thousand francs a year, but is descended from an obscure laborer who managed to secure some of the national property. Then he becomes an army contractor, speculated on defeat as well as on victory, and does not know now what to do with his money.

"But as the millionaire is timid, dull, and always bored, the spendthrift amuses him by his impertinent ways and jokes; he prompts him when he is at a loss for an answer, extricates him out of his difficulties, serves as his guide in the great forests of Paris which are strewn

with so many pitfalls, and helps him to avoid those vulgar adventures which socially ruin a man, no matter how well ballasted he may be. Then he points out to him what women would make suitable mistresses for him, who make a man noted and give the effect of some rare and beautiful flower pinned into his buttonhole. He is the confidant of his intrigues, his guest when he gives small, special entertainments, his daily, familiar table companion, and the buffoon whose sly humor stimulates one, and whose witticisms you tolerate."

"Really, really," the captain interrupted him, "you have been going on for more than a quarter of an hour without saying anything."

But Royaumont shrugged his shoulders and continued:

"Oh! you can be very tiresome when you please, my dear fellow! Last year, when he was at daggers drawn with his people, who were deafening him with recriminations, were worrying him and threatening him with a lot of annoyance, Quillanet got married. It was a marriage of reason, which apparently changed his habits and his tastes, more especially as the banker was at that time keeping a perfect little marvel of a woman, a Parisian jewel of unspeakable attraction and of bewitching delicacy, that adorable Suzette Marly, who is just like a pocket Venus, and who in some prior stage of existence must have been Phryne or Lesbia. Of course he did not get rid of her, but as he was bound to take some judicious precautions, which are necessary for a man who is deceiving his wife, he rented and furnished a house, with a courtyard in front, and a garden at the back, which

one might think had been built to shelter some amorous folly. It was the ideal that he had dreamed of, warm, snug, elegant, the walls covered with silk hangings of subdued tints, large pier-glasses, allegorical pictures, and filled with luxurious, low furniture that seemed to invite caresses and embraces.

"Bordenave occupied the ground floor, and the next floor served as a shrine for the banker and his mistress. Well, just a week ago, in order to hide the situation better. Bordenave asked Quillanet and some other friends to one of those luncheons which he understands so well how to order, such a delicious luncheon, that before it was quite over, every man had a woman on his lap, and was asking himself whether a kiss from coaxing and naughty lips was not a thousand times more intoxicating than the finest old brandy or the choicest vintage wines, when the butler came in with an embarrassed look, and whispered something to him.

"'Tell the gentleman that he has made a mistake, and ask him to leave me in peace.' Bordenave replied to him in an angry voice. The servant went out and returned immediately to say that the intruder was using threats, that he refused to leave the house, and even spoke of having recourse to the commissary of police. Bordenave frowned, threw his napkin down, upset two glasses, and swaggered out with a red face, swearing and ejaculating:

"'This is rather too much, and the fellow shall find out what going out of the window means, if he will not leave by the door.' But in the anteroom he found himself face to face with a very

cool, polite, impassive gentleman, who said very quietly to him:

"'You are Count Robert de Borde-nave, I believe, Monsieur?'"

"'Yes, Monsieur.'"

"'And the lease that you signed at the lawyer's, Monsieur Albin Calvert, in the Rue du Frabourg-Poissonnière, is in your name, I believe?'"

"'Certainly, Monsieur.'"

"'Then I regret extremely to have to tell you that if you are not in a position to pay the various accounts which different people have intrusted to me for collection here, I shall be obliged to seize all the furniture, pictures, plate, clothes, etc., which are here in the presence of two witnesses who are waiting for me downstairs in the street.'"

"'I suppose this is some joke, Monsieur?'"

"'It would be a very poor joke, Monsieur le Comte, and one which I should certainly not allow myself toward you!'"

"The situation was absolutely critical and ridiculous, the more so, that in the dining-room the women, who were slightly tipsy, were tapping the wine-glasses with their spoons, and calling for him. What could he do except explain his misadventure to Quillanet, who became sobered immediately, and rather than see his shrine of love violated, his secret sin disclosed, and his pictures, ornaments, and furniture sold, gave a check in due form for the claim there and then, though with a very wry face. And in spite of this, some people will deny that men who are utterly broke often have a stroke of luck!"

The Colonel's Ideas

"UPON my word," said Colonel Laporte, "I am old and gouty, my legs are as stiff as two sticks, and yet if a pretty woman were to tell me to go through the eye of a needle, I believe I should take a jump at it, like a clown through a hoop. I shall die like that; it is in the blood. I am an old beau, one of the old *régime*, and the sight of a woman, a pretty woman, stirs me to the tips of my toes. There!"

"And then we are all very much alike in France; we remain cavaliers, cavaliers of love and fortune, since God has been abolished, whose bodyguard we really were. But nobody will ever get

the woman out of our hearts; there she is, and there she will remain; we love her, and shall continue to love her, and to commit all kinds of frolics on her account, so long as there is a France on the map of Europe. And even if France were to be wiped off the map, there would always be Frenchmen left.

"When I am in the presence of a woman, of a pretty woman, I feel capable of anything. By Jove, when I feel her looks penetrating me, those confounded looks which set your blood on fire, I could do anything: fight a duel, have a row, smash the furniture, anything just to show that I am the strong-

est, the bravest, the most daring, and the most devoted of men.

"But I am not the only one—certainly not; the whole French army is like me, that I will swear to. From the common soldier to the general, we all go forward, and to the very end, mark you, when there is a woman in the case, a pretty woman. Remember what Joan of Arc made us do formerly! Come, I'd make a bet that if a pretty woman had taken command of the army on the eve of Sedan, when Marshal MacMahon was wounded, we should have broken through the Prussian lines, by Jove! and have had a drink out of their guns.

"It was not Trochu, but Saint-Geneviève, who was required in Paris, and I remember a little anecdote of the war which proves that we are capable of everything in the presence of a woman.

"I was a captain, a simple captain, at the time, and was in command of a detachment of scouts who were retreating through a district swarming with Prussians. We were surrounded, pursued, tired out, and half dead with fatigue and hunger, and by the next day we had to reach Bar-sur-Tain; otherwise we should be done for, cut off from the main body and killed. I do not know how we managed to escape so far. However, we had ten leagues to go during the night, ten leagues through the snow, and upon empty stomachs. I thought to myself:

" 'It is all over; my poor fellows will never be able to do it.'

"We had eaten nothing since the day before, and the whole day long we remained hidden in a barn, huddled close together, so as not to feel the cold much; we did not venture to speak or

even move, and we slept by fits and starts, like you sleep when you are worn out with fatigue.

"It was dark by five o'clock, that wan darkness caused by the snow, and I shook up my men. Some of them would not get up; they were almost incapable of moving or of standing upright, and their joints were stiff from the cold and want of motion.

"In front of us there was a large expanse of flat, bare country; the snow was still falling like a curtain, in large, white flakes, which concealed everything under a heavy, thick, frozen mantle, a mattress of ice. You would have thought that it was the end of things.

" 'Come, my lads, let us start.'

"They looked at the thick, white dust which was coming down, and seemed to think: 'We have had enough of this; we may just as well die here!' Then I took out my revolver, and said:

" 'I will shoot the first man who finches.' And so they set off, but very slowly, like men whose legs were of very little use to them. I sent four of them three hundred yards ahead, to scout, and the others followed pellmell, walking at random and without any order. I put the strongest in the rear, with orders to quicken the pace of the sluggards with the points of their bayonets in the back.

"The snow seemed as if it were going to bury us alive; it powdered our *képis** and cloaks without melting, and made phantoms of us, ghosts of wornout soldiers who were very tired, and I said to myself: 'We shall never get out of this, except by a miracle.'

*Forage-caps.

"Sometimes we had to stop for a few minutes, on account of those who could not follow us, hearing nothing but the falling snow, that vague, almost indiscernible sound which the flakes make, as they come down together. Some of the men shook themselves, but others did not move, and so I gave the order to set off again; they shouldered their rifles, and with weary feet we set out again, when suddenly the scouts fell back. Something had alarmed them; they had heard voices in front of them, and so I sent six men and a sergeant on ahead, and waited.

"All at once a shrill cry, a woman's cry, pierced through the heavy silence of the snow, and in a few minutes they brought back two prisoners, an old man and a girl, whom I questioned in a low voice. They were escaping from the Prussians, who had occupied their house during the evening, and who had got drunk. The father had become alarmed on his daughter's account, and, without even telling their servants, they had made their escape into the darkness. I saw immediately that they belonged to the upper classes, and, as I should have done in any case, I invited them to come with us. So we started off together, and as the old man knew the road, he acted as our guide.

"It had ceased snowing; the stars appeared, and the cold became intense. The girl, who was leaning on her father's arm, walked wearily and with jerks, and several times she murmured:

" 'I have no feeling at all in my feet.' I suffered more than she did, I believe, to see that poor little woman dragging herself like that through the snow. But suddenly she stopped, and said:

" 'Father, I am so tired that I cannot go any further.'

"The old man wanted to carry her, but he could not even lift her up, and she fell on the ground with a deep sigh. We all came round her, and as for me, I stamped on the ground, not knowing what to do, quite unable to make up my mind to abandon that man and girl like that. Suddenly one of the soldiers, a Parisian, whom they had nicknamed 'Pratique,' said:

" 'Come, comrades, we must carry the young lady, otherwise we shall not show ourselves Frenchmen, confound it!'

"I really believe that I swore with pleasure, and said: 'That is very good of you, my children; I will take my share of the burden.'

"We could indistinctly see the trees of a little wood on the left, through the darkness. Several men went into it, and soon came back with a bundle of branches twisted into a litter.

" 'Who will lend us his cloak? It is for a pretty girl, comrades,' Pratique said, and ten cloaks were thrown to him. In a moment, the girl was lying, warm and comfortable, among them, and was raised upon six shoulders. I placed myself at their head, on the right, and very pleased I was with my charge.

"We started off much more briskly, as if we had been having a drink of wine, and I even heard a few jokes. A woman is quite enough to electrify Frenchmen, you see. The soldiers, who were reanimated and warm, had almost reformed their ranks, and an old *franc-tireur** who was following the litter,

*Volunteers, in the Franco-German war of 1870-1871, of whom the Germans often made short work when caught.

waiting for his turn to replace the first of his comrades who might give in, said to one of his neighbors, loud enough for me to hear:

"I am not a young man, now; but by Jove, there is nothing like a woman to make you feel queer from head to foot!"

"We went on, almost without stopping, until three o'clock in the morning, when suddenly our scouts fell back again. Soon the whole detachment showed nothing but a vague shadow on the ground, as the men lay on the snow, and I gave my orders in a low voice, and heard the harsh, metallic sound of the cocking of rifles. There, in the middle of the plain, some strange object was moving about. It might have been taken for some enormous animal running about, which uncoiled itself like a serpent, or came together into a coil, then suddenly went quickly to the right or left, stopped, and then went on again. But presently the wandering shape came near, and I saw a dozen lancers, one behind the other, who were trying to find their way, which they had lost.

"By this time they were so near that I could hear the panting of the horses, the clink of the swords, and the creaking of the saddles, and so cried: 'Fire!'

"Fifty rifle-shots broke the stillness of the night; then there were four or five reports, and at last one single shot was heard. When the smoke had cleared away we saw that the twelve men and nine horses had fallen. Three of the animals were galloping away at a furious pace. One of them was dragging the body of its rider behind it. His foot had caught in the stirrup, and his body rebounded from the ground in a horrible way.

"One of the soldiers behind me gave a harsh laugh, and said: 'There are a few more widows now!'

"Perhaps he was married. And another added: 'It did not take long!'

"A head was put out of the litter:

"'What is the matter?' she asked; 'you are fighting?'

"'It is nothing, Mademoiselle,' I replied; 'we have got rid of a dozen Prussians!'

"'Poor fellows!' she said. But as she was cold, she quickly disappeared beneath the cloaks again, and we started off once more. We marched on for a long time, and at last the sky began to grow pale. The snow became quite clear, luminous, and bright, and a rosy tint appeared in the east. Suddenly a voice in the distance cried:

"'Who goes there?'

"The whole detachment halted, and I advanced to say who we were. We had reached the French lines, and as my men defiled before the outpost, a commandant on horseback, whom I had informed of what had taken place, asked in a sonorous voice, as he saw the litter pass him:

"'What have you there?'

"And immediately a small head, covered with light hair, appeared, disheveled and smiling, and replied:

"'It is I, Monsieur.'

"At this, the men raised a hearty laugh, and we felt quite light-hearted, while Pratique, who was walking by the side of the litter, waved his *képi*, and shouted:

"'Vive la France!' And I felt really moved. I do not know why, except that I thought it a pretty and gallant thing to say.

"It seemed to me as if we had just saved the whole of France, and had done something that other men could not have done, something simple, and really patriotic. I shall never forget that little face, you may be sure, and if I had to give my opinion about abolishing drums, trumpets, and bugles, I should propose to replace them in every regiment by a pretty girl, and that would be even

better than playing the 'Marseillaise.' By Jove! it would put some spirit into a trooper to have a Madonna like that, a living Madonna, by the colonel's side."

He was silent for a few moments, and then with an air of conviction, and jerking his head, continued:

"You see, we are very fond of women, we Frenchmen!"

Two Little Soldiers

EVERY Sunday, the moment they were dismissed, the two little soldiers made off. Once outside the barracks, they struck out to the right through Courbevoie, walking with long rapid strides, as though they were on a march.

When they were beyond the last of the houses, they slackened pace along the bare, dusty roadway which goes toward Bézons.

They were both small and thin, and looked quite lost in their coats, which were too big and too long. Their sleeves hung down over their hands, and they found their enormous red breeches, which compelled them to waddle, very much in the way. Under their stiff, high helmets their faces had little character—two poor, sallow Breton faces, simple with an almost animal simplicity, and with gentle and quiet blue eyes.

They never conversed during these walks, but went straight on, each with the same thoughts in his head. This thought atoned for the lack of conversation; it was this that just inside the little wood near Les Champioux they

had found a place which reminded them of their own country, where they could feel happy again.

When they arrived under the trees where the roads from Colombes and from Chatou cross, they would take off their heavy helmets and wipe their foreheads. They always halted on the Bézons bridge to look at the Seine, and would remain there two or three minutes, bent double, leaning on the parapet.

Sometimes they would gaze out over the great basin of Argenteuil, where the skiffs might be seen scudding, with their white, careening sails, recalling perhaps the look of the Breton waters, the harbor of Vanne, near which they lived, and the fishing-boats standing out across the Morbihan to the open sea.

Just beyond the Seine they bought their provisions from a sausage merchant, a baker, and a wine-seller. A piece of blood-pudding, four sous' worth of bread, and a liter of "petit bleu" constituted the provisions, which they carried off in their handkerchiefs. After

they had left Bézons they traveled slowly and began to talk.

In front of them a barren plain studded with clumps of trees led to the wood, to the little wood which had seemed to them to resemble the one at Kermarivan. Grainfields and hayfields bordered the narrow path, which lost itself in the young preeness of the crops, and Jean Kerderen would always say to Luc le Ganidec:

"It looks like it does near Plounivon."

"Yes; exactly."

Side by side they strolled, their souls filled with vague memories of their own country, with awakened images as naïve as the pictures on the colored broadsheets which you buy for a penny. They kept on recognizing, as it were, now a corner of a field, a hedge, a bit of moorland, now a crossroad, now a granite cross. Then, too, they would always stop beside a certain landmark, a great stone, because it looked something like the cromlech at Locneuveu.

Every Sunday on arriving at the first clump of trees Luc le Ganidec would cut a switch, a hazel switch, and begin gently to peel off the bark, thinking meanwhile of the folk at home. Jean Kerderen carried the provisions.

From time to time Luc would mention a name, or recall some deed of their childhood in a few brief words, which caused long thoughts. And their own country, their dear, distant country, recaptured them little by little, seizing on their imaginations, and sending to them from afar her shapes, her sounds, her well-known prospects, her odors—odors of the green lands where the salt sea-air was blowing.

No longer conscious of the exhala-

tions of the Parisian stables, on which the earth of the *banlieue* fattens, they scented the perfume of the flowering broom, which the salt breeze of the open sea plucks and bears away. And the sails of the boats from the river banks seemed like the white wings of the coasting vessels seen beyond the great plain which extended from their homes to the very margin of the sea.

They walked with short steps, Luc le Ganidec and Jean Kerderen, content and sad, haunted by a sweet melancholy, by the lingering, ever-present sorrow of a caged animal who remembers his liberty.

By the time that Luc had stripped the slender wand of its bark they reached the corner of the wood where every Sunday they took breakfast. They found the two bricks which they kept hidden in the thicket, and kindled a little fire of twigs, over which to roast the blood-pudding at the end of a bayonet.

When they had breakfasted, eaten their bread to the last crumb, and drunk their wine to the last drop, they remained seated side by side upon the grass, saying nothing, their eyes on the distance, their eyelids drooping, their fingers crossed as at mass, their red legs stretched out beside the poppies of the field. And the leather of their helmets and the brass of their buttons glittered in the ardent sun, making the larks, which sang and hovered above their heads, cease in mid-song.

Toward noon they began to turn their eyes from time to time in the direction of the village of Bézons, because the girl with the cow was coming. She passed by them every Sunday on her way to

milk and change the pasture of her cow—the only cow in this district which ever went out of the stable to grass. It was pastured in a narrow field along the edge of the wood a little farther on.

They soon perceived the girl, the only human being within vision, and were gladdened by the brilliant reflections thrown off by the tin milk-pail under the rays of the sun. They never talked about her. They were simply glad to see her, without understanding why.

She was a big strong wench with red hair, burned by the heat of sunny days, a sturdy product of the environs of Paris.

Once, finding them seated in the same place, she said:

“Good morning. You two are always here, aren’t you?”

Luc le Ganidec, the bolder, stammered:

“Yes, we come to rest.”

That was all. But the next Sunday she laughed on seeing them, laughed with a protecting benevolence and a feminine keenness which knew well enough that they were bashful. And she asked:

“What are you doing there? Are you trying to see the grass grow?”

Luc was cheered up by this, and smiled likewise: “Maybe we are.”

“That’s pretty slow work,” said she.

He answered, still laughing: “Well, yes, it is.”

She went on. But coming back with a milk-pail full of milk, she stopped again before them, and said:

“Would you like a little? It will taste like home.”

With the instinctive feeling that they were of the same peasant race as she,

being herself perhaps also far away from home, she had divined and touched the spot.

They were both touched. Then with some difficulty, she managed to make a little milk run into the neck of the glass bottle in which they carried their wine. And Luc drank first, with little swallows, stopping every minute to see whether he had drunk more than his half. Then he handed the bottle to Jean.

She stood upright before them, her hands on her hips, her pail on the ground at her feet, glad at the pleasure which she had given.

Then she departed, shouting: “*Allons*, adieu! Till next Sunday!”

And as long as they could see her at all, they followed with their eyes her tall silhouette, which faded, growing smaller and smaller, seeming to sink into the verdure of the fields.

When they were leaving the barracks the week after, Jean said to Luc:

“Oughtn’t we to buy her something good?”

They were in great embarrassment before the problem of the choice of a delicacy for the girl with the cow. Luc was of the opinion that a little tripe would be the best, but Jean preferred some *berlingots* because he was fond of sweets. His choice fairly made him enthusiastic, and they bought at a grocer’s two sous’ worth of white and red candies.

They ate their breakfast more rapidly than usual, being nervous with expectation.

Jean saw her first. “There she is!” he cried. Luc added: “Yes, there she is.”

While yet some distance off she laughed at seeing them. Then she cried:

"Is everything going as you like it?"

And in unison they asked:

"Are you getting on all right?"

Then she conversed, talked to them of simple things in which they felt an interest—of the weather, of the crops, and of her master.

They were afraid to offer her the candies, which were slowly melting away in Jean's pocket.

At last Luc grew bold, and murmured:

"We have brought you something."

She demanded, "What is it? Tell me!"

Then Jean, blushing up to his ears, managed to get at the little paper cornucopia, and held it out.

She began to eat the little bonbons, rolling them from one cheek to the other where they made little round lumps. The two soldiers, seated before her, gazed at her with emotion and delight.

Then she went to milk her cow, and once more gave them some milk on coming back.

They thought of her all the week; several times they even spoke of her. The next Sunday she sat down with them for a little longer talk; and all three, seated side by side, their eyes lost in the distance, clasping their knees with their hands, told the small doings, the minute details of life in the villages where they had been born, while over there the cow, seeing that the milkmaid had stopped on her way, stretched out toward her its heavy head with its dripping nostrils, and gave a long low to call her.

Soon the girl consented to eat a bit of

bread with them and drink a mouthful of wine. She often brought them plums in her pocket, for the season of plums had come. Her presence sharpened the wits of the two little Breton soldiers, and they chattered like two birds.

But, one Tuesday, Luc le Ganidec asked for leave—a thing which had never happened before—and he did not return until ten o'clock at night. Jean racked his brains uneasily for a reason for his comrade's going out in this way.

The next Thursday Luc, having borrowed ten sous from his bedfellow, again asked and obtained permission to leave the barracks for several hours. When he set off with Jean on their Sunday walk his manner was very queer, quite restless, and quite changed. Kerderen did not understand, but he vaguely suspected something without divining what it could be.

They did not say a word to one another until they reached their usual halting-place, where, from their constant sitting in the same spot the grass was quite worn away. They ate their breakfast slowly. Neither of them felt hungry.

Before long the girl appeared. As on every Sunday, they watched her coming. When she was quite near, Luc rose and made two steps forward. She put her milk-pail on the ground and kissed him. She kissed him passionately, throwing her arms about his neck, without noticing Jean, without remembering that he was there, without even seeing him.

And he sat there desperate, poor Jean, so desperate that he did not understand, his soul quite overwhelmed, his heart bursting, but not yet understand-

ing himself. Then the girl seated herself beside Luc, and they began to chatter.

Jean did not look at them. He now divined why his comrade had gone out twice during the week, and he felt within him a burning grief, a kind of wound, that sense of rending which is caused by treason.

Luc and the girl went off together to change the position of the cow. Jean followed them with his eyes. He saw them departing side by side. The red breeches of his comrade made a bright spot on the road. It was Luc who picked up the mallet and hammered down the stake to which they tied the beast.

The girl stooped to milk her, while he stroked the cow's sharp spine with a careless hand. Then they left the milk-pail on the grass, and went deep into the wood.

Jean saw nothing but the wall of leaves where they had entered; and he felt himself so troubled that if he had tried to rise he would certainly have fallen. He sat motionless, stupefied by astonishment and suffering, with an agony which was simple but deep. He wanted to cry, to run away, to hide himself, never to see anybody any more.

Soon he saw them issuing from the thicket. They returned slowly, holding each other's hands as in the villages do those who are promised. It was Luc who carried the pail.

They kissed one another again before they separated, and the girl went off after having thrown Jean a friendly "Good evening" and a smile which was full of meaning. To-day she no longer thought of offering him any milk.

The two little soldiers sat side by

side, motionless as usual, silent and calm, their placid faces betraying nothing of all which troubled their hearts. The sun fell on them. Sometimes the cow lowed, looking at them from afar.

At their usual hour they rose to go back. Luc cut a switch. Jean carried the empty bottle to return it to the wine-seller at Bézons. Then they sallied out upon the bridge, and, as they did every Sunday, stopped several minutes in the middle to watch the water flowing.

Jean leaned, leaned more and more, over the iron railing, as though he saw in the current something which attracted him. Luc said: "Are you trying to drink?" Just as he uttered the last word Jean's head overbalanced his body, his legs described a circle in the air, and the little blue and red soldier fell in a heap, struck the water, and disappeared.

Luc, his tongue paralyzed with anguish, tried in vain to shout. Farther down he saw something stir; then the head of his comrade rose to the surface of the river and sank immediately. Farther still he again perceived a hand, a single hand, which issued from the stream and then disappear. That was all.

The bargemen who dragged the river did not find the body that day.

Luc set out alone for the barracks going at a run, his soul filled with despair. He told of the accident, with tears in his eyes, and a husky voice, blowing his nose again and again: "He leaned over—he—he leaned over—so far—so far that his head turned a somersault; and—and—so he fell—he fell—"

Choked with emotion, he could say no more. If he had only known!

Ghosts

Just at the time when the Concordat was in its most flourishing condition, a young man belonging to a wealthy and highly respectable middle-class family went to the office of the head of the police at P——, and begged for his help and advice, which was immediately promised him.

"My father threatens to disinherit me," the young man began, "although I have never offended against the laws of the State, of morality, or against his paternal authority, merely because I do not share his blind reverence for the Catholic Church and her clergy. On that account he looks upon me, not merely as Latitudinarian but as a perfect Atheist, and a faithful old manservant of ours, who is much attached to me, and who accidentally saw my father's will, told me in confidence that he had left all his property to the Jesuits. I think this is highly suspicious, and I fear that the priests have been maligning me to my father. Until less than a year ago, we used to live very quietly and happily together, but ever since he has had so much to do with the clergy, our domestic peace and happiness are at an end."

"What you have told me," replied the official, "is as likely as it is regrettable, but I fail to see how I can interfere in the matter. Your father is in full possession of all his mental faculties, and can dispose of all his property exactly as he pleases. I think that your protest is premature; you must wait until his will can legally take effect, and then you can invoke the aid of justice. I am sorry to say that just now I can do nothing for you."

"I think you will be able to," the young man replied; "for I believe that a very clever piece of deceit is being carried on."

"How? Please explain yourself more clearly."

"When I remonstrated with him, yesterday evening, he referred to my dead mother, and at last assured me, in a voice of the deepest conviction, that she had frequently appeared to him, had threatened him with all the torments of the damned, if he did not disinherit his son, who had fallen away from God, and leave all his property to the Church. Now I do not believe in ghosts."

"Neither do I," the police director replied, "but I cannot well do anything on such grounds, having nothing but superstitions to go upon. You know how the Church rules all our affairs since the Concordat with Rome, and if I investigate this matter and obtain no results, I am risking my post. It would be very different if you could adduce any proofs for your suspicions. I do not deny that I should like to see the clerical party, which will, I fear, be the ruin of Austria, receive a staggering blow; try, therefore, to get to the bottom of this business, and then we will talk it over again."

About a month passed, without the young Latitudinarian being heard of. Suddenly, he came one evening, in a great state of excitement, and told the Inspector that he was in a position to expose the priestly deceit which he had mentioned, if the authorities would assist him. The police director asked for further information.

"I have obtained a number of impor-

tant clues," said the young man. "In the first place, my father confessed to me that my mother did not appear to him in our house, but in the churchyard where she is buried. My mother was consumptive for many years, and a few weeks before her death she went to the village of S——, where she died and was buried. In addition to this, I found out from our footman that my father has already left the house twice, late at night, in company of X——, the Jesuit priest, and that on both occasions he did not return till morning. Each time he was remarkably uneasy and low-spirited after his return, and had three masses said for my dead mother. He also told me just now that he has to leave home this evening on business, but, immediately after he told me that, our footman saw the Jesuit go out of the house. We may, therefore, assume that he intends this evening to consult the spirit of my dead mother again, and this would be an excellent opportunity to solve the matter, if you do not object to opposing the most powerful force in the Empire for the sake of such an insignificant individual as myself."

"Every citizen has an equal right to the protection of the State," the police director replied; "and I think that I have shown often enough that I am not wanting in courage to perform my duty, no matter how serious the consequences may be. But only very young men act without any prospects of success, because they are carried away by their feelings. When you came to me the first time, I was obliged to refuse your request for assistance, but to-day your request is just and reasonable. It is now

eight o'clock; I shall expect you in two hours' time, here in my office. At present, all you have to do is to hold your tongue; everything else is my affair."

As soon as it was dark, four men got into a closed carriage in the yard of the police-office, and were driven in the direction of the village of S——. Their carriage, however, did not enter the village, but stopped at the edge of a small wood in the immediate neighborhood. Here all four alighted: the police director, accompanied by the young Latitudinarian, a police sergeant, and an ordinary policeman, the latter however, dressed in plain clothes.

"The first thing for us to do is to examine the locality carefully," said the police director. "It is eleven o'clock and the exorcisers of ghosts will not arrive before midnight, so we have time to look round us, and to lay our plans."

The four men went to the churchyard, which lay at the end of the village, near the little wood. Everything was as still as death, and not a soul was to be seen. The sexton was evidently sitting in the public house, for they found the door of his cottage locked, as well as the door of the little chapel that stood in the middle of the churchyard.

"Where is your mother's grave?" the police director asked. As there were only a few stars visible, it was not easy to find it, but at last they managed it, and the police director surveyed the neighborhood of it.

"The position is not a very favorable one for us," he said at last; "there is nothing here, not even a shrub, behind which we could hide."

But just then, the policeman reported

that he had tried to get into the sexton's hut through the door or a window, and that at last he had succeeded in doing so by breaking open a square in a window which had been mended with paper, that he had opened it and obtained possession of the key, which he brought to the police director.

The plans were very quickly settled. The police director had the chapel opened and went in with the young Latitudinarian; then he told the police sergeant to lock the door behind him and to put the key back where he had found it, and to shut the window of the sexton's cottage carefully. Lastly, he made arrangements as to what they were to do, in case anything unforeseen should occur, whereupon the sergeant and the constable left the churchyard, and lay down in a ditch at some distance from the gate, but opposite to it.

Almost as soon as the clock struck half past eleven, they heard steps near the chapel, whereupon the police director and the young Latitudinarian went to the window in order to watch the beginning of the exorcism, and as the chapel was in total darkness, they thought that they should be able to see without being seen; but matters turned out differently from what they expected.

Suddenly, the key turned in the lock. They barely had time to conceal themselves behind the altar, before two men came in, one of whom was carrying a dark lantern. One was the young man's father, an elderly man of the middle class, who seemed very unhappy, and depressed, the other the Jesuit father X——, a tall, lean, big-boned man, with a thin, bilious face, in which two large gray eyes shone restlessly under bushy,

black eyebrows. He lit the tapers, which were standing on the altar, and began to say a "Requiem Mass;" while the old man kneeled on the altar steps and served him.

When it was over, the Jesuit took the book of the Gospels and the holy-water sprinkler, and went slowly out of the chapel, the old man following him with the holy-water basin in one hand, and a taper in the other. Then the police director left his hiding place, and stooping down, so as not to be seen, crept to the chapel window, where he cowered down carefully; the young man followed his example. They were now looking straight at his mother's grave.

The Jesuit, followed by the superstitious old man, walked three times round the grave; then he remained standing before it, and by the light of the taper read a few passages from the Gospel. Then he dipped the holy-water sprinkler three times into the holy-water basin, and sprinkled the grave three times. Then both returned to the chapel, kneeled down outside it with their faces toward the grave, and began to pray aloud, until at last the Jesuit sprang up, in a species of wild ecstasy, and cried out three times in a shrill voice:

*"Exsurge! Exsurge! Exsurge!"**

Scarcely had the last words of the exorcism died away, when thick, blue smoke rose out of the grave, rapidly grew into a cloud, and began to assume the outlines of a human body, until at last a tall, white figure stood behind the grave, and beckoned with its hand.

"Who art thou?" the Jesuit asked sol-

*Arise.

emly, while the old man began to cry.

"When I was alive, I was called Anna Maria B——," replied the ghost in a hollow voice.

"Will you answer all my questions?" the priest continued.

"As far as I can."

"Have you then yet been delivered from purgatory by our prayers, and by all the Masses for your soul, which we have said for you?"

"Not yet, but soon, soon I shall be."

"When?"

"As soon as that blasphemer, my son, has been punished."

"Has that not already happened? Has not your husband disinherited his lost son, and in his place made the Church his heir?"

"That is not enough."

"What must he do besides?"

"He must deposit his will with the Judicial Authorities, as his last will and testament, and drive the reprobate out of his house."

"Consider well what you are saying; must this really be?"

"It must, or otherwise I shall have to languish in purgatory much longer," the sepulchral voice replied with a deep sigh; but the next moment the ghost yelled out in terror: "Oh! Good Lord!" and began to run away as fast as it could. A shrill whistle was heard, and then another, and the police director

laid his hand on the shoulder of the exorciser with the remark:

"You are in custody."

Meanwhile, the police sergeant and the policeman, who had come into the churchyard, had caught the ghost, and dragged it forward. It was the sexton, who had put on a flowing, white dress, and wore a wax mask, which bore a striking resemblance to his mother, so the son declared.

When the case was heard, it was proved that the mask had been very skillfully made from a portrait of the deceased woman. The government gave orders that the matter should be investigated as secretly as possible, and left the punishment of Father X—— to the spiritual authorities, which was a matter of necessity, at a time when priests were outside of the jurisdiction of the civil authorities. It is needless to say that Father X—— was very comfortable during his imprisonment in a monastery, in a part of the country which abounded with game and trout.

The only valuable result of the amusing ghost story was that it brought about a reconciliation between father and son; the former, as a matter of fact, felt such deep respect for priests and their ghosts in consequence of the apparition, that a short time after his wife had left purgatory for the last time in order to talk with him, he turned Protestant.

Was It a Dream?

"I HAD loved her madly!

"Why does one love? Why does one love? How queer it is to see only one

being in the world, to have only one thought in one's mind, only one desire in the heart, and only one name on the

lips—a name which comes up continually, rising, like the water in a spring, from the depths of the soul to the lips, a name which one repeats over and over again, which one whispers ceaselessly, everywhere, like a prayer.

“I am going to tell you our story, for love only has one, which is always the same. I met her and lived on her tenderness, on her caresses, in her arms, in her dresses, on her words, so completely wrapped up, bound, and absorbed in everything which came from her, that I no longer cared whether it was day or night, or whether I was dead or alive, on this old earth of ours.

“And then she died. How? I do not know; I no longer know anything. But one evening she came home wet, for it was raining heavily, and the next day she coughed, and she coughed for about a week, and took to her bed. What happened I do not remember now, but doctors came, wrote, and went away. Medicines were brought, and some women made her drink them. Her hands were hot, her forehead was burning, and her eyes bright and sad. When I spoke to her, she answered me, but I do not remember what we said. I have forgotten everything, everything, everything! She died, and I very well remember her slight, feeble sigh. The nurse said: ‘Ah!’ and I understood, I understood!

“I knew nothing more, nothing. I saw a priest, who said: ‘Your mistress?’ and it seemed to me as if he were insulting her. As she was dead, nobody had the right to say that any longer, and I turned him out. Another came who was very kind and tender, and I

shed tears when he spoke to me about her.

“They consulted me about the funeral, but I do not remember anything that they said, though I recollected the coffin, and the sound of the hammer when they nailed her down in it. Oh! God, God!

“She was buried! Buried! She! In that hole! Some people came—female friends. I made my escape and ran away. I ran, and then walked through the streets, went home, and the next day started on a journey.

* * * * *

“Yesterday I returned to Paris, and when I saw my room again—our room, our bed, our furniture, everything that remains of the life of a human being after death—I was seized by such a violent attack of fresh grief, that I felt like opening the window and throwing myself out into the street. I could not remain any longer among these things, between these walls which had inclosed and sheltered her, which retained a thousand atoms of her, of her skin and of her breath, in their imperceptible crevices. I took up my hat to make my escape, and just as I reached the door, I passed the large glass in the hall, which she had put there so that she might look at herself every day from head to foot as she went out, to see if her toilette looked well and was correct and pretty from her little boots to her bonnet.

“I stopped short in front of that looking-glass in which she had so often been reflected—so often, so often, that it must have retained her reflection. I was standing there trembling with my eyes fixed on the glass—on that flat,

profound, empty glass—which had contained her entirely, and had possessed her as much as I, as my passionate looks had. I felt as if I loved that glass. I touched it; it was cold. Oh! the recollection! sorrowful mirror, burning mirror, horrible mirror, to make men suffer such torments! Happy is the man whose heart forgets everything that it has contained, everything that has passed before it, everything that has looked at itself in it, or has been reflected in its affection, in its love! How I suffer!

“I went out without knowing its, without wishing it, and toward the cemetery. I found her simple grave, a white marble cross, with these few words:

“‘She loved, was loved, and died.’

“She is there below, decayed! How horrible! I sobbed with my forehead on the ground, and I stopped there for a long time, a long time. Then I saw that it was getting dark and a strange, mad wish, the wish of a despairing lover, seized me. I wished to pass the night, the last night in weeping on her grave. But I should be seen and driven out. How was I to manage? I was cunning and got up and began to roam about in that city of the dead. I walkēd and walked. How small this city is, in comparison with the other, the city in which we live. And yet, how much more numerous the dead are than the living. We want high houses, wide streets, and much room for the four generations who see the daylight at the same time, drink water from the spring, and wine from the vines, and eat bread from the plains.

“And for all the generations of the

dead, for all that ladder of humanity that has descended down to us, there is scarcely anything, scarcely anything! The earth takes them back, and oblivion effaces them. Adieu!

“At the end of the cemetery, I suddenly perceived that I was in its oldest part, where those who had been dead a long time are mingling with the soil, where the crosses themselves are decayed, where possibly newcomers will be put to-morrow. It is full of untended roses, of strong and dark cypress-trees, a sad and beautiful garden, nourished on human flesh.

“I was alone, perfectly alone. So I crouched in a green tree and hid myself there completely amid the thick and somber branches. I waited, clinging to the stem, like a shipwrecked man does to a plank.

“When it was quite dark, I left my refuge and began to walk softly, slowly, inaudibly through that ground full of dead people. I wandered about for a long time, but could not find her tomb again. I went on with extended arms, knocking against the tombs with my hands, my feet, my knees, my chest, even with my head, without being able to find her. I groped about like a blind man finding his way, I felt the stones, the crosses, the iron railings, the metal wreaths, and the wreaths of faded flowers! I read the names with my fingers, by passing them over the letters. What a night! What a night! I could not find her again!

“There was no moon. What a night! I was frightened, horribly frightened in these narrow paths, between two rows of graves. Graves! graves! graves! nothing but graves! On my right, on

my left, in front of me, around me, everywhere there were graves! I sat down on one of them, for I could not walk any longer, my knees were so weak. I could hear my heart beat! And I heard something else as well. What? A confused, nameless noise. Was the noise in my head, in the impenetrable night, or beneath the mysterious earth, the earth sown with human corpses? I looked all around me, but I cannot say how long I remained there; I was paralyzed with terror, cold with fright, ready to shout out, ready to die.

"Suddenly, it seemed to me that the slab of marble on which I was sitting, was moving. Certainly it was moving, as if it were being raised. With a bound, I sprang on to the neighboring tomb, and I saw, yes, I distinctly saw the stone which I had just quitted rise upright. Then the dead person appeared, a naked skeleton, pushing the stone back with its bent back. I saw it quite clearly, although the night was so dark. On the cross I could read:

"'Here lies Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He loved his family, was kind and honorable, and died in the grace of the Lord.'

"The dead man also read what was inscribed on his tombstone; then he picked up a stone off the path, a little, pointed stone, and began to scrape the letters carefully. He slowly effaced them, and with the hollows of his eyes he looked at the places where they had been engraved. Then with the tip of the bone that had been his forefinger, he wrote in luminous letters, like those lines which boys trace on walls with the tip of a lucifer match:

"'Here reposes Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He hastened his father's death by his unkindness, as he wished to inherit his fortune, he tortured his wife, tormented his children, deceived his neighbors, robbed everyone he could, and died wretched.'

"When he had finished writing, the dead man stood motionless, looking at his work. On turning round I saw that all the graves were open, that all the dead bodies had emerged from them, and that all had effaced the lines inscribed on the gravestones by their relations, substituting the truth instead. And I saw that all had been the tormentors of their neighbors—malicious, dishonest, hypocrites, liars, rogues, calumniators, envious; that they had stolen, deceived, performed every disgraceful, every abominable action, these good fathers, these faithful wives, these devoted sons, these chaste daughters, these honest tradesmen, these men and women who were called irreproachable. They were all writing at the same time, on the threshold of their eternal abode, the truth, the terrible and the holy truth of which everybody was ignorant, or pretended to be ignorant, while they were alive.

"I thought that *she* also must have written something on her tombstone, and now running without any fear among the half-open coffins, among the corpses and skeletons, I went toward her, sure that I should find her immediately. I recognized her at once, without seeing her face, which was covered by the winding-sheet, and on the marble cross, where shortly before I had read:

"'She loved, was loved, and died.'
I now saw:

“‘Having gone out in the rain one day, in order to deceive her lover, she caught cold and died.’

“It appears that they found me at daybreak, lying on the grave unconscious.”

* * * * *

The New Sensation

LITTLE Madame d'Ormonde certainly had the devil in her. She rejoiced in a fantastic, baffling brain, through which the most unheard-of caprices passed, in which ideas danced and jostled each other, like those pieces of differently colored glass in a kaleidoscope, which form such strange figures when they have been shaken. In her *Parisine* was fermenting to such an extent—you know the analysis of *Parisine*, which Roqueplan lately gave—that the most learned member of The Institute would have wasted his science and his wisdom if he had tried to follow her slips and her subterfuges.

That was, very likely, the reason why she attracted, retained, and infatuated even those who had paid their debt to implacable love—men who thought they were strong, free from those passions under the influence of which men lose their heads, and beyond the reach of woman's perfidious snares. Perhaps, it was her small, soft, delicate, white hands, which always smelled of some subtle, delicious perfume, and those small fingers which men kissed almost with devotion, and with absolute pleasure. Or, perhaps, it was her silky, golden hair, or her large, blue eyes, full of enigma, of curiosity, of desire, or her changeable mouth, small and infantine at one moment, when she was pout-

ing, and smiling and as open as a rose that is unfolding in the sun when she opened it in a laugh and showed her pearly teeth, so that it became a target for kisses. Who will ever be able to explain the magic and sorcery which some Chosen Women exercise over all men, the despotic authority against which nobody would think of rebelling?

Among the numerous men who had wooed her, who were anxiously waiting for that wonderful moment when her heart would beat, when this mocking companion would grow tired and abandon herself to the pleasure of loving and of being loved, would become intoxicated with the honey of caresses, and would not longer refuse her lips to kisses, like some restive animal that fears to joke, none had so made up his mind to win the game, and pursue this deceptive siege, as Xavier de Fontailles. He labored for his object with a patient energy and a strength of will which no snubs could weaken—with the ardent fervor of a believer who has started on a long pilgrimage, and who supports all the suffering of the long journey with the fixed and consoling idea that one day he will be able to throw himself on his knees at the shrine where he would worship, and to listen to the divine words which will mean Paradise to him.

He gave way to Madame d'Ormonde's slightest whims, did all he could to amuse her, never hurt her feelings, strove to become a friend whom she could not do without, *the* friend of whom, in the end, a woman grows more jealous than she does of her husband, and to whom she confesses everything, her daily worries and her dreams of the future.

She would very likely have suffered and wept, have felt a void in her existence, if they had separated forever, if he had disappeared. She would not have hesitated to defend him, even at the risk of compromising herself and of passing as his mistress, if any one had attacked him in her presence, and sometimes she would say, with a sudden, laughing sadness in her voice:

"If I were really capable of loving for five minutes consecutively, I should love you."

When they were walking in the Boise de Boulogne, while the victoria was waiting near Armenonville, during afternoon talks when, as he used to say, they were hanging over the abyss until they both grew giddy, and spoke of love madly and ceaselessly,—returning to the subject constantly, and steeping themselves with it,—Madame d'Ormonde would occasionally propound one of her favorite theories. Yes, she certainly understood what possession of a beloved object was, that touch of madness which seizes you from head to foot, which fires your blood, making you forget everything else in a man's embraces, in that supreme pleasure which overwhelms you, and which rivets two beings together forever, in heart and in brain. But she cared for it only at some un-

expected moment, in a strange place, with a touch of something novel about it, which one would remember all one's life, of something amusing and almost maddening, which one had been in search of for a long time, and which imparted a breath of romance, as it were, into the commonplace details of ordinary love.

And Xavier de Fontrailles did all he could to discover such a place, but failed. He tried a bachelor's lodgings with silk tapestry, like a boudoir of the seventeenth century, a villa hidden like a nest among trees and rosebushes, a Japanese house furnished in extraordinary fashion and very expensively, with latticed windows from which one could see the sea, an old melancholy palace, from which one could see the Grand Canal, rooms, hotels, queer quarters, private rooms in restaurants, and small country houses in the recesses of woods.

Madame d'Ormonde went on her way without turning her head, but Xavier, alas! became more and more smitten, as amorous as an overgrown schoolboy who has never hitherto had any converse with a woman, and who is foolish enough to pick up the flowers that fall from her bodice, and to be lost and unhappy when he does not see her, or hear her soft, cooing voice, or see her smile.

One evening, however, he had gone with her to the fair at Saint-Cloud. They went into three shows, deafened by the noise of the organs, the whistling of the machinery of the roundabouts, and the hubbub of the crowd that flowed among the booths illuminated by paraffin lamps. As they were passing in front

of a fortune-teller's van, Monsieur de Fontrailles stopped and said to Madame d'Ormonde:

"Would you like to have your fortune told?"

The van was a very fine specimen of its kind, and had, no doubt, traveled far and wide. Placards and portraits, bordered by advertisements, hung above the shaky steps, and the small windows with their closed shutters were almost hidden by boxes of sweet basil and mignonette, while an old, bald parrot, with her feathers all ruffled, was asleep just outside.

The fortune-teller was sitting on a chair, quietly knitting a stocking. On their approach she got up, went up to Madame d'Ormonde and said in an unctuous voice:

"I reveal the present, the past, and the future, and even the name of the future husband or wife, and of deceased relations, as well as my client's present and future circumstances. I have performed before crowned heads. The Emperor of Brazil came to me, with the illustrious poet, Victor Hugo. My charge is five francs for telling your fortune from the cards or by your hand, and twenty francs for the whole lot. Would you like the lot, Madame?"

Madame d'Ormonde gave vent to a burst of sonorous laughter, like a street girl who is amusing herself. But they

went in and Monsieur de Fontrailles opened the glass door, which was covered by a heavy red curtain. When they entered, the young woman uttered an exclamation of surprise. The interior of the van was full of roses, arranged in the most charming manner, as if for a lovers' meeting. On a table covered with a damask cloth, surrounded by piles of cushions, a supper was waiting for chance comers, and at the other end, concealed by heavy hangings, one could see a large, wide bed, one of those beds which give rise to suggestion!

Xavier had shut the door again, and Madame d'Ormonde looked at him in a strange manner, with rather flushed cheeks, with palpitating nostrils, and with a look in her eyes such as he had never seen in them before. In a very low voice, while his heart beat violently, he whispered into her ear:

"Well, does the decoration please you this time?"

She replied by holding up her lips to him, and then filled two glasses with extra dry champagne, which was as pale as the skin of a fair woman. Then she said, almost as if already rather drunk:

"I am decidedly worth a big stake!"

It was in this fashion that Madame d'Ormonde, for the first and last time, deceived her husband; and it was at the fair at Saint-Cloud, in a fortune-teller's van.

Virtue!

EVERY Friday, regularly, about eleven o'clock in the morning, he came into the courtyard, put down his soft hat at

his feet, struck a few chords on his guitar and began a ballad in a full, rich voice. And soon at every window in

the four sides of that dull, barracklike building appeared some girls, one in an elegant dressing-gown, another in a little jacket, most of them with their bosoms and arms bare, all of them just out of bed, with their hair hastily twisted up, their eyes blinking in the sudden blaze of sunlight, their complexions dull, and their eyes still heavy with sleep.

They swayed in time to his slow melody, and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of it. Pennies, and even silver poured into the handsome singer's hat, and more than one of them would have liked to follow the penny which she threw to him, and go with this singer who had the voice of a siren. For he seemed to say to all these amorous girls: "Come, come to my retreat, for there you will find a palace of crystal and gold, wreaths which are always fresh, and happiness and love which never die."

That was what they seemed to hear, these unhappy girls, when they heard him sing the old legends which in childhood they had believed. That was what they understood by the simple words of the ballad—that and nothing else. How could anyone doubt it, seeing the fresh roses on their cheeks, and the tender lights which flickered like mystic fires in their eyes, now for the moment, once more the eyes of innocent young girls? But, alas! of young girls who had grown up too quickly, who were too precocious, and who had too soon become what they were, poor vendors of love, always in search of that love for which they were paid.

That was why, when he had finished his second ballad, and sometimes sooner, concupiscent looks appeared in their

eyes. The boatman of their dreams, the water-sprite of the fairy tales, vanished in the mist of childish recollections, and the singer reassumed his real shape, that of a wandering minstrel and strolling player, whom they wished to requite with love. And the coppers and small silver were showered on him again, with engaging smiles, with the leers of amorous women, even with a "*P'st, P'st,*" which soon transformed the barracklike courtyard into an enormous cage full of twittering birds. Several of them could not restrain themselves, but ejaculated, their eyes filled with desire: "How handsome—good heavens, *how* handsome he is!"

He was really handsome—nobody could deny it, even too handsome, with that regular beauty which almost palls on you. He had large, gentle, almond-shaped eyes, a Grecian nose, a bow-shaped mouth hidden by a heavy moustache, and long, black, curly hair; in short, a head fit to be put into a hair-dresser's window, or, better still, perhaps, on to the front page of the ballads he was singing. What made him still handsomer was that his self-conceit wore a cloak of sovereign indifference, for not only was he blind to the ogling and deaf to the "*P'st, P'st,*" but when he had finished he shrugged his shoulders, winked mischievously, and curled his lips contemptuously, as if to say: "The stove is not being heated for you, my little kittens!"

You would have thought that he wished to show his contempt, make himself commonplace in the eyes of these amorous girls, and to dampen their ardor, for he cleared his throat ostentatiously and offensively, far more than

was necessary, after singing, as if he would have liked to spit at them. But even this did not make him unpoetical in their eyes, and most of them, absolutely mad over him, went so far as to say that he did it "like a swell!"

The girl who in her enthusiasm had been the first to utter an exclamation of intense passion, after tossing him small silver, had thrown him a twenty-franc gold-piece, and made up her mind to have an answer. This morning instead of a "*P'st, P'st*" she spoke out boldly despite the presence and silence of the others.

At first they were dumfounded at her audacity, and then all their cheeks flushed with jealousy, and the flame of desire shot from their eyes. Then from every window there came a perfect torrent of:

"Yes, come up, come up." "Don't go there! Come here."

Meanwhile, there was a shower of half-pence, of francs, of gold coins, of cigars and oranges, while lace pocket handkerchiefs, silk neckties, and scarfs fluttered in the air and fell round the singer, like a flight of many-colored butterflies.

The minstrel picked up the spoil calmly, almost carelessly, stuffed the money into his pocket, made a bundle of the furbelows, which he tied up as if they had been soiled linen, and then rising up, he put his felt hat on his head and said:

"Thank you, ladies, but indeed I cannot."

They thought that he was embarrassed by so many simultaneous de-

mands, and one of them said: "Let him choose."

"Yes, yes, that is it!" they exclaimed in unison.

But he repeated: "I tell you I cannot."

They put his refusal down to his gallantry, and several of them exclaimed, almost with tears of emotion: "He is all heart!" And the same voice that had spoken before (it was the one who wished to settle the matter amicably) said: "We must draw lots."

"Yes, yes, we will," they all cried. And again there was a deeper silence than before, for it was caused by anxiety, their hearts beating almost audibly.

The singer profited by it to say slowly: "I cannot allow that either; I neither desire all of you at once, nor one after the other—at any time! I tell you once for all."

"Why? Why?" Now they were almost screaming, angry, and sorry at the same time. Their cheeks had turned from scarlet to livid, their eyes flashed fire, and some shook their fists menacingly.

"Silence!" cried the girl, who had spoken first. "Be quiet, you pack of hussies! Let him explain himself, and tell us why!"

"Yes, yes, be quiet! Make him explain himself, in God's name!"

Then, in the expectant silence that ensued, the singer said, opening his arms wide, with a gesture of despairing inability to do what they wanted:

"Why do you want me? It is very flattering, but I cannot gratify you, for I have two girls of my own at home."

The Thief

"CERTAINLY," exclaimed Dr. Sorbier, who, while appearing to be thinking of something else, had been listening quietly to those surprising accounts of burglaries and of daring acts which might have been borrowed from the trial of Cartouche. "Certainly, I do not know any viler fault, nor any meaner action than to attack a girl's innocence, to corrupt her, to profit by a moment of unconscious weakness and of madness, when her heart is beating like that of a frightened fawn, when her body, which has been unpolluted up till then, is palpitating with desire and her pure lips seek those of her seducer—when her whole being is feverish and vanquished, and she abandons herself without thinking of the irremediable stain, nor of her fall, nor of the painful awakening on the morrow.

"The man who has brought this about slowly, viciously, and none can tell with what science of evil, and who, in such a case, has not steadiness and self-restraint enough to quench that flame by some icy words, who has not sense enough for two, who cannot recover his self-possession and master the runaway brute within him, who loses his head on the edge of the precipice over which the girl is going to fall, is as contemptible as any man who breaks open a lock, or as any rascal on the lookout for a house left defenseless and without protection, or as any adventurer looking for some easy and profitable stroke of business, or as that thief whose various exploits you have just related to us.

"I, for my part, utterly refuse to absolve him even when extenuating circumstances plead in his favor, even

when he is carrying on a dangerous flirtation, in which a man tries in vain to keep his balance and not to exceed the limits of the game any more than at lawn tennis, even when the parts are reversed and a man's adversary is some precocious, curious, seductive girl, who shows you immediately that she has nothing to learn and nothing to experience, except the last chapter of love—one of those girls from whom may fate always preserve our sons, and whom a psychological novel writer has christened 'Demi-Virgins.'

"It is of course difficult and painful for that coarse and unfathomable vanity which is characteristic of every man, and which might be called malism, not to stir such a charming fire, to act the Joseph and the fool, to turn away his eyes, and, as it were, to put wax into his ears, as did the companions of Ulysses when attracted by the divine, seductive songs of the Sirens. It is hard not to touch that pretty table, covered with a perfectly new cloth, at which you are invited to take a seat before anyone else, in such a suggestive voice, and are requested to quench your thirst and to taste that new wine whose fresh and strange flavor you will never forget. But who would hesitate to exercise such self-restraint if, when he rapidly examines his conscience in one of those instinctive moments of reason in which a man thinks clearly and recovers his head—if he were to measure the gravity of the fault, think of the error, think of its consequences, of the reprisals, of the uneasiness which he would always feel in the future, and which would destroy the repose and the happiness of his life?

"You may guess that behind all these moral reflections, such as a gray-beard like myself may indulge in, there is a story hidden, and sad as it is, I am sure it will interest you on account of the strange heroism that it shows."

He was silent for a few moments as if to classify his recollections, and with elbows resting on the arms of his easy-chair, and eyes looking into space, he continued in the slow voice of a hospital professor, who is explaining a case to his class of students, at a bedside:

"He was one of those men who as our grandfathers used to say, never met with a cruel woman, the type of an adventurous knight who was always foraging, who had something of the scamp about him, but who despised danger and was bold even to rashness. He was ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, had an irresistible charm about him, and was one of those men in whom we excuse the greatest excesses as the most natural things in the world. He had run through all his money through gambling and with pretty girls, and so became, as it were, a soldier of fortune, who amused himself whenever and however he could, and was at that time quartered at Versailles.

"I knew him to the very depths of his childish heart, which was only too easily penetrated and sounded. I loved him like some old bachelor uncle loves a nephew who plays him tricks, but who knows how to make him indulgent, and how to wheedle him. He had made me his confidant far more than his adviser, kept me informed of his slightest tricks, though he always pretended to be speaking about one of his friends, and not about himself, and I must confess that

his youthful impetuosity, his careless gaiety, and his amorous ardor sometimes distracted my thoughts and made me envy the handsome, vigorous young fellow who was so happy in being alive. I had not the courage to check him, to show him his right road, and to call out to him 'Take care!' as children do at blindman's bluff.

"And one day, after one of those interminable cotillons, where the couples do not leave each other for hours, but have a loose rein and can disappear together without anybody noticing it, the poor fellow at last discovered what love was, that real love which takes up its abode in the very center of the heart and in the brain, and is proud of being there, which rules like a sovereign and a tyrannous master. He grew desperately enamored of a pretty, but badly brought up girl, who was as disquieting and as wayward as she was pretty.

"She loved him, however, or rather she idolized him despotically, madly, with all her enraptured soul, and all her excited person. Left to do as she pleased by imprudent and frivolous parents, suffering from neurosis, in consequence of the unwholesome friendships contracted at the convent-school, instructed by what she saw and heard and knew was going on around her, in spite of her deceitful and artificial conduct, knowing that neither her father nor her mother, who were very proud of their race as well as avaricious, would ever agree to let her marry the man whom she had taken a liking to,—that handsome fellow who had little besides visionary ideas and debts, and who belonged to the middle classes,—she laid aside all scruples, thought of nothing

but of belonging to him altogether, of taking him for her lover, and of triumphing over his desperate resistance as an honorable man.

"By degrees, the unfortunate man's strength gave way, his heart grew softened, his nerves became excited, and he allowed himself to be carried away by the current which buffeted him, surrounded him, and left him on the shore like a waif and a stray.

"They wrote letters full of temptation and of madness to each other, and not a day passed without their meeting, either accidentally, as it seemed, or at parties and balls. She had given him her lips in long, ardent caresses, and she had sealed their compact of mutual passion with kisses of desire and of hope. And at last she brought him to her room, almost in spite of himself."

The doctor stopped, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears, as these former troubles came back to his mind. Then in a hoarse voice, he went on, full of the horror of what he was going to relate:

"Each night, for months, he scaled the garden wall, and holding his breath and listening for the slightest noise, like a burglar who is going to break into a house, he entered by the servants' door, which she had left open, went barefoot down a long passage and up the broad staircase, which creaked occasionally, to the second story, where his mistress's room was, and stopped there nearly the whole night.

"One night, when it was darker than usual, and he was hurrying lest he should be later than the time agreed on, the officer knocked up against a piece of furniture in the anteroom and upset it. It so happened that the girl's mother

had not gone to sleep yet, either because she had a sick headache, or else because she had sat up late over some novel. Frightened at the unusual noise, which disturbed the silence of the house, she jumped out of bed, opened the door, saw some one indistinctly running away and keeping close to the wall, and, immediately thinking that there were burglars in the house, she aroused her husband and the servants by her frantic screams. The unfortunate man knew what he was about, and seeing his dilemma he determined to be taken for a common thief rather than dishonor his adored mistress and betray the secret of their guilty love. So he ran into the drawing-room, felt on the tables and whatnots, filled his pockets at random with valuable knickknacks, and then cowered down behind the grand piano, which barred up a corner of a large room.

"The servants, who had run in with lighted candles, found him, and overwhelming him with abuse, seized him by the collar and dragged him, panting and half dead with shame and terror, to the nearest police station. He defended himself with intentional awkwardness when he was brought up for trial, kept up his part with the most perfect self-possession, and without any signs of the despair and anguish that he felt in his heart. Condemned and degraded and made to suffer martyrdom in his honor as a man and as a soldier, he did not protest, but went to prison as one of those criminals whom society destroys like noxious vermin.

"He died there of misery and of bitterness of spirit, with the name of the fair-haired idol for whom he had sacri-

ficed himself on his lips, as if it had been an ecstatic prayer. He intrusted his will to the priest who administered extreme unction to him, and requested him to give it to me. In it, without mentioning anybody, and without in the least lifting the veil, he at last explained the enigma, and cleared himself of those

accusations, the terrible burden of which he had borne until his last breath.

"I have always thought myself, though I do not know why, that the girl married and had several charming children, whom she brought up with austere strictness, and in the serious piety of former days!"

The Diary of a Madman

HE WAS dead—the head of a high tribunal, the upright magistrate, whose irreproachable life was a proverb in all the courts of France. Advocates, young counselors, judges had saluted, bowing low in token of profound respect, remembering that grand face, pale and thin, illumined by two bright, deep-set eyes.

He had passed his life in pursuing crime and in protecting the weak. Swindlers and murderers had no more redoubtable enemy, for he seemed to read in the recesses of their souls their most secret thoughts.

He was dead, now, at the age of eighty-two, honored by the homage and followed by the regrets of a whole people. Soldiers in red breeches had escorted him to the tomb, and men in white cravats had shed on his grave tears that seemed to be real.

But listen to the strange paper found by the dismayed notary in the desk where the judge had kept filed the records of great criminals! It was entitled:

WHY?

June 20, 1851. I have just left court. I have condemned Blonde to death! Now, why did this man kill his five chil-

dren? Frequently one meets with people to whom killing is a pleasure. Yes, yes, it should be a pleasure—the greatest of all, perhaps, for is not killing most like eating? To make and to destroy! These two words contain the history of the universe, the history of all worlds, all that is, all! Why is it not intoxicating to kill?

June 25. To think that there is a being who lives, who walks, who runs. A being? What is a being? An animated thing which bears in it the principle of motion, and a will ruling that principle. It clings to nothing, this thing. Its feet are independent of the ground. It is a grain of life that moves on the earth, and this grain of life, coming I know not whence, one can destroy at one's will. Then nothing—nothing more. It perishes; it is finished.

June 26. Why, then, is it a crime to kill? Yes, why? On the contrary, it is the law of nature. Every being has the mission to kill; he kills to live, and he lives to kill. The beast kills without ceasing, all day, every instant of its existence. Man kills without ceasing, to nourish himself; but since in addition he needs to kill for pleasure, he has

invented the chase! The child kills the insects he finds, the little birds, all the little animals that come in his way. But this does not suffice for the irresistible need of massacre that is in us. It is not enough to kill beasts; we must kill man too. Long ago this need was satisfied by human sacrifice. Now, the necessity of living in society has made murder a crime. We condemn and punish the assassin! But as we cannot live without yielding to this natural and imperious instinct of death, we relieve ourselves, from time to time, by wars. Then a whole nation slaughters another nation. It is a feast of blood, a feast that maddens armies and intoxicates the civilians, women and children, who read, by lamplight at night, the feverish story of massacre.

And do we despise those picked out to accomplish these butcheries of men? No, they are loaded with honors. They are clad in gold and in resplendent stuffs; they wear plumes on their heads and ornaments on their breasts; and they are given crosses, rewards, titles of every kind. They are proud, respected, loved by women, cheered by the crowd, solely because their mission is to shed human blood! They drag through the streets their instruments of death, and the passer-by, clad in black, looks on with envy. For to kill is the great law put by nature in the heart of existence! There is nothing more beautiful and honorable than killing!

June 30. To kill is the law, because Nature loves eternal youth. She seems to cry in all her unconscious acts: "Quick! quick! quick!" The more she destroys, the more she renews herself.

July 3. It must be a pleasure, unique

and full of zest, to kill: to place before you a living, thinking being; to make therein a little hole, nothing but a little hole, and to see that red liquid flow which is the blood, which is the life; and then to have before you only a heap of limp flesh, cold, void of thought!

August 5. I, who have passed my life in judgment, condemning, killing by words pronounced, killing by the guillotine those who had killed by the knife, if I should do as all the assassins whom I have smitten have done, I, I—who would know it?

August 10. Who would ever know? Who would ever suspect me, especially if I should choose a being I had no interest in doing away with? ?

August 22. I could resist no longer. I have killed a little creature as an experiment, as a beginning. Jean, my servant, had a goldfinch in a cage hung in the office window. I sent him on an errand, and I took the little bird in my hand, in my hand where I felt its heart beat. It was warm. I went up to my room. From time to time I squeezed it tighter; its heart beat faster; it was atrocious and delicious. I was nearly choking it. But I could not see the blood.

Then I took scissors, short nail scissors, and I cut its throat in three strokes, quite gently. It opened its bill, it struggled to escape me, but I held it, oh! I held it—I could have held a mad dog—and I saw the blood trickle.

And then I did as assassins do—real ones. I washed the scissor and washed my hands. I sprinkled water, and took the body, the corpse, to the garden to hide it. I buried it under a strawberry-plant. It will never be found. Every

day I can eat a strawberry from that plant. How one can enjoy life, when one knows how!

My servant cried; he thought his bird flown. How could he suspect me? Ah!

August 25. I must kill a man! I must!

August 30. It is done. But what a little thing! I had gone for a walk in the forest of Vernes. I was thinking of nothing, literally nothing. See! a child on the road, a little child eating a slice of bread and butter. He stops to see me pass and says, "Good day, Mr. President."

And the thought enters my head: "Shall I kill him?"

I answer: "You are alone, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"All alone in the wood?"

"Yes, sir."

The wish to kill him intoxicated me like wine. I approached him quite softly, persuaded that he was going to run away. And suddenly I seized him by the throat. He held my wrists in his little hands, and his body writhed like a feather on the fire. Then he moved no more. I threw the body in the ditch, then some weeds on top of it. I returned home and dined well. What a little thing it was! In the evening I was very gay, light, rejuvenated, and passed the evening at the Prefect's. They found me witty. But I have not seen blood! I am not tranquil.

August 31. The body has been discovered. They are hunting for the assassin. Ah!

September 1. Two tramps have been arrested. Proofs are lacking.

September 2. The parents have been to see me. They wept! Ah!

October 6. Nothing has been discovered. Some strolling vagabond must have done the deed. Ah! If I had seen the blood flow it seems to me I should be tranquil now!

October 10. Yet another. I was walking by the river, after breakfast. And I saw, under a willow, a fisherman asleep. It was noon. A spade, as if expressly put there for me, was standing in a potato-field near by.

I took it. I returned; I raised it like a club, and with one blow of the edge I cleft the fisherman's head. Oh! he bled, this one!—rose-colored blood. It flowed into the water quite gently. And I went away with a grave step. If I had been seen! Ah! I should have made an excellent assassin.

October 25. The affair of the fisherman makes a great noise. His nephew, who fished with him, is charged with the murder.

October 26. The examining magistrate affirms that the nephew is guilty. Everybody in town believes it. Ah! ah!

October 27. The nephew defends himself badly. He had gone to the village to buy bread and cheese, he declares. He swears that his uncle had been killed in his absence! Who would believe him?

October 28. The nephew has all but confessed, so much have they made him lose his head! Ah! Justice!

November 15. There are overwhelming proofs against the nephew, who was his uncle's heir. I shall preside at the sessions.

January 25, 1852. To death! to death! to death! I have had him con-

demned to death! The advocate-general spoke like an angel! Ah! Yet another! I shall go to see him executed!

March 10. It is done. They guillotined him this morning. He died very well! very well! That gave me pleasure! How fine it is to see a man's head cut off!

Now, I shall wait, I can wait. It

would take such a little thing to let myself be caught.

* * * * *

The manuscript contained more pages, but told of no new crime.

Alienist physicians to whom the awful story has been submitted declare that there are in the world many unknown madmen, as adroit and as terrible as this monstrous lunatic.

On Perfumes

THREE ladies belonging to that class of society which has nothing useful to do, and therefore cannot employ its time sensibly, were sitting on a bench in the shade of some pine-trees at Ischl, and talking incidentally on the subject of perfumes.

One of the ladies, Princess F——, a slim, handsome brunette, declared there was nothing like the smell of Russia leather; she wore dull brown Russia leather boots, a Russia leather dress suspender, to keep her petticoats out of the dirt and dust, a Russia leather belt which spanned her wasplike waist, and carried a Russia leather purse. She even wore a brooch and bracelet of gilt Russia leather; people declared that her bedroom was papered with Russia leather, and that her *cicisbeo* was obliged to wear high Russia leather boots and tight breeches, but that, on the other hand, her husband was excused from wearing anything at all in Russia leather.

Countess H——, a very stout lady, who had formerly been very beautiful

and of a very loving nature, but loving, after the fashion of her time, *à la* Parthenia and Griselda, could not get over the vulgar taste of the young Princess. All she cared for was the smell of hay, and she it was who brought the perfume New Mown Hay into fashion. Her ideal was a freshly mown field in the moonlight, and when she rolled slowly along, she looked like a moving haystack, and exhaled an odor of hay around her.

The third lady's taste was even more peculiar than Countess H——'s, and more vulgar than the Princess's, for the small, delicate, light-haired Countess W—— lived only for—the smell of stables. Her friends could not understand this at all; the Princess raised her beautiful, full arm with its broad bracelet to her Grecian nose and inhaled the sweet smell of the Russia leather, while the sentimental hayrick exclaimed over and over again:

“How dreadful! What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?”

The delicate little Countess seemed

very much embarrassed at the effect made by her confession, and tried to justify her taste.

"Prince T—— told me that that smell had quite bewitched him once," she said. "It was in a Jewish town in Galicia, where he was quartered once with his hussar regiment, and a number of poor, ragged circus riders, with half-starved horses, came from Russia and put up a circus with a few poles and some rags of canvas. The Prince went to see them, and found a woman among them, who was neither young nor beautiful, but bold and impudent. She wore a faded, bright red jacket trimmed with old, shabby imitation ermine, which reeked of the stable, as the Prince expressed it. But she bewitched him with the odor, so that every time that the shameless wretch visited him, smelling abominably of the stable, he felt as if he were mesmerized."

"How disgusting!" both the other ladies said, and involuntarily held their noses.

"What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?" the haystack said with a sigh, and the little light-haired Countess was abashed, and held her tongue.

At the beginning of the winter season the three friends were together again in the gay, imperial city on the blue Danube. One morning the Princess accidentally met the enthusiast for hay at the house of the little, light-haired Countess, and was obliged to follow the latter to her private riding-school, where she was taking her daily lesson. As soon as she saw them, she came up, and beckoned her riding-master to her to help her out of the saddle. He was a young man of extremely good and

athletic build, which was set off by tight breeches and a short, velvet coat. He ran up and took his lovely burden into his arms with visible pleasure, to help her off the quiet, perfectly broken horse.

When the ladies saw the handsome, vigorous man, it was quite enough to explain their little friend's predilection for the smell of a stable. When the latter saw their looks, she blushed up to the roots of her hair, and thought her only way out of the difficulty was to order the riding-master, in a very authoritative manner, to take the horse back to the stable. He merely bowed, with an indescribable smile, and obeyed her.

A few months afterward, Viennese society was alarmed at the news that Countess W—— had been divorced from her husband. The event was unexpected, as they had apparently always lived very happily together, and gossip was unable to mention any man on whom she had bestowed even the most passing attention, beyond the requirements of politeness.

Long afterward, however, a strange report became current. A chattering lady's maid declared that the handsome riding-master had once so far forgotten himself as to strike the Countess with his riding-whip. A groom had told the Count of the occurrence, and when the latter called the insolent fellow to account for it, the Countess covered him with her own body, and thus gave occasion for the divorce.

Years had passed since then and the Countess H—— had grown stouter and more sentimental. Ischl and hayricks were not enough for her any longer;

she spent the winter on lovely Lago Maggiore, where she walked among laurel bushes and cypress-trees, and was rowed about on the warm, moonlight nights.

One evening she was returning home from Isola Bella, in the company of an English lady who was also a great lover of nature, when they met a beautiful private boat in which a very unusual couple were sitting—a small, delicate, light-haired woman, wrapped in a white burnoose, and a handsome, athletic man, in tight, white breeches, a short, black velvet coat trimmed with sable, a red fez on his head, and a riding-whip in his hand.

Countess H—— involuntarily uttered a loud exclamation.

“What is the matter with you?” the English lady asked. “Do you know those people?”

“Certainly! She is a Viennese lady,” Countess H—— whispered; “Countess W——.”

“Oh! Indeed you are quite mistaken; it is a Count Savelli and his wife. They are a handsome couple, don’t you think so?”

When the boat came nearer, Countess H—— saw that it was little Countess W——, and that the handsome man was her former riding-master, whom she had married, and for whom she had bought a title from the Pope*; and as the two boats passed each other, the short sable cloak, which was thrown carelessly over his shoulders, exhaled, like the old cat’s skin jacket of the female circus rider, a strong stable perfume.

*Frequently done formerly, and not unknown even now.

The Will

I KNEW that tall young fellow, René de Bourneval. He was an agreeable man, though of a rather melancholy turn of mind, and prejudiced against everything, very skeptical, and fond of tearing worldly hypocrisies to pieces. He often used to say:

“There are no honorable men, or, at any rate, they only appear so when compared to low people.”

He had two brothers, whom he shunned, the Messieurs de Courcils. I thought they were by another father, on account of the difference in the name. I had frequently heard that something

strange had happened in the family, but I did not know the details.

As I took a great liking to him, we soon became intimate, and one evening, when I had been dining with him alone, I asked him by chance: “Are you by your mother’s first or second marriage?” He grew rather pale; then he flushed, and did not speak for a few moments, he was visibly embarrassed. Then he smiled in that melancholy and gentle manner peculiar to him, and said:

“My dear friend, if it will not weary you, I can give you some very strange particulars about my life. I know you

to be a sensible man, so I do not fear that our friendship will suffer by my revelations, and should it suffer, I should not care about having you for my friend any longer.

"My mother, Madame de Courcils, was a poor, little, timid woman, whom her husband had married for the sake of her fortune. Her whole life was a continual martyrdom. Of a loving, delicate mind, she was constantly ill-treated by the man who ought to have been my father, one of those bores called country gentlemen. A month after their marriage he was living with a servant, and besides that, the wives and daughters of his tenants were his mistresses, which did not prevent him from having three children by his wife, that is, if you count me in. My mother said nothing, and lived in that noisy house like a little mouse. Set aside, disparaged, nervous, she looked at people with bright, uneasy, restless eyes, the eyes of some terrified creature which can never shake off its fear. And yet she was pretty, very pretty and fair, a gray blonde, as if her hair had lost its color through her constant fears.

"Among Monsieur de Courcils's friends who constantly came to the château there was an ex-cavalry officer, a widower, a man to be feared, a man at the same time tender and violent, and capable of the most energetic resolution, Monsieur de Bourneval, whose name I bear. He was a tall, thin man, with a heavy black mustache, and I am very like him. He was a man who had read a great deal, and whose ideas were not like those of most of his class. His great-grandmother had been a friend of J. J. Rousseau, and you might have

said that he had inherited something of this ancestral connection. He knew the "Contrat Social" and the "Nouvelle Héloïse" by heart, and, indeed, all those philosophical books which led the way to the overthrow of our old usages, prejudices, superannuated laws, and imbecile morality.

"It seems that he loved my mother, and she loved him, but their intrigue was carried on so secretly that no one guessed it. The poor, neglected, unhappy woman must have clung to him in a despairing manner, and in her intimacy with him must have imbibed all his ways of thinking, theories of free thought, audacious ideas of independent love. But as she was so timid that she never ventured to speak aloud, it was all driven back, condensed, and expressed in her heart, which never opened itself.

"My two brothers were very cruel to her, like their father, and never gave her a caress. Used to seeing her count for nothing in the house, they treated her rather like a servant, and so I was the only one of her sons who really loved her, and whom she loved.

"When she died I was seventeen, and I must add, in order that you may understand what follows, that there had been a lawsuit between my father and my mother. Their property had been separated, to my mother's advantage, as, thanks to the workings of the law and the intelligent devotion of a lawyer to her interests, she had preserved the right to make her will in favor of anyone she pleased.

"We were told that there was a will lying at the lawyer's, and were invited to be present at the reading of it. I can

remember it, as if it were yesterday. It was a grand, dramatic, yet burlesque and surprising scene, brought about by the posthumous revolt of a dead woman, by a cry for liberty from the depths of her tomb, on the part of a martyred woman who had been crushed by a man's habits during her life, and, who, from her grave, uttered a despairing appeal for independence.

"The man who thought that he was my father, a stout, ruddy-faced man, who gave you the idea of a butcher, and my brothers, two great fellows of twenty and twenty-two, were waiting quietly in their chairs. Monsieur de Bourneval, who had been invited to be present, came in and stood behind me. He was very pale, and bit his mustache, which was turning gray. No doubt he was prepared for what was going to happen. The lawyer, after opening the envelope in our presence, double-locked the door and began to read the will, which was sealed with red wax, and the contents of which he knew not."

My friend stopped suddenly and got up, and from his writing-table took an old paper, unfolded it, kissed it, and then continued:

"This is the will of my beloved mother:

"I, the undersigned, Anne-Catherine-Geneviève-Mathilde de Croixluce, the legitimate wife of Léopold-Joseph Gontran de Courcils, sound in body and mind, here express my last wishes:

"I first of all ask God, and then my dear son René, to pardon me for the act I am about to commit. I believe that my child's heart is great enough to understand me, and to forgive me. I have suffered my whole life long. I was married out of calculation, then de-

spised, misunderstood, oppressed, and constantly deceived by my husband.

"I forgive him, but I owe him nothing.

"My eldest sons never loved me, never caressed me, scarcely treated me as a mother, but during my whole life I was everything that I ought to have been, and I owe them nothing more after my death. The ties of blood cannot exist without daily and constant affection. An ungrateful son is less than a stranger; he is a culprit, for he has no right to be indifferent toward his mother.

"I have always trembled before men, before their unjust laws, their inhuman customs, their shameful prejudices. Before God, I have no longer any fear. Dead, I fling aside disgraceful hypocrisy; I dare to speak my thoughts, and to avow and to sign the secret of my heart.

"I therefore leave that part of my fortune of which the law allows me to dispose, as a deposit with my dear lover Pierre-Gennes-Simon de Bourneval, to revert afterward to our dear son René.

"(This wish is, moreover, formulated more precisely in a notarial deed.)

"And I declare before the Supreme Judge who hears me, that I should have cursed Heaven and my own existence, if I had not met my lover's deep, devoted, tender, unshaken affection, if I had not felt in his arms that the Creator made His creatures to love, sustain, and console each other, and to weep together in the hours of sadness.

"Monsieur de Courcils is the father of my two eldest sons; René alone owes his life to Monsieur de Bourneval. I pray to the Master of men and of their destinies to place father and son above social prejudices, to make them love each other until they die, and to love me also in my coffin.

"These are my last thoughts, and my last wish.

"MATHILDE DE CROIXLUCE.

"Monsieur de Courcils had risen, and he cried:

"'It is the will of a mad woman.'

"Then Monsieur de Bourneval stepped forward and said in a loud and penetrating voice: 'I, Simon de Bourneval, solemnly declare that this writing contains nothing but the strict truth, and I am ready to prove it by letters which I possess.'

"On hearing that, Monsieur de Courcils went up to him, and I thought that they were going to collar each other. There they stood, both of them, tall, one stout and the other thin, both trembling. My mother's husband stammered out:

"'You are a worthless wretch!'

"And the other replied in a loud, dry voice:

"'We will meet somewhere else, Monsieur. I should have already slapped your ugly face, and challenged you a long time ago, if I had not, before all else, thought of the peace of mind of that poor woman whom you made to suffer so much during her lifetime.'

"Then, turning to me, he said:

"'You are my son; will you come with

me? I have no right to take you away, but I shall assume it, if you will allow me.' I shook his hand without replying, and we went out together; I was certainly three parts mad.

"Two days later Monsieur de Bourneval killed Monsieur de Courcils in a duel. My brothers, fearing some terrible scandal, held their tongues. I offered them, and they accepted, half the fortune which my mother had left me. I took my real father's name, renouncing that which the law gave me, but which was not really mine. Monsieur de Bourneval died three years afterward, and I have not consoled myself yet."

He rose from his chair, walked up and down the room, and, standing in front of me, said:

"I maintain that my mother's will was one of the most beautiful and loyal, as well as one of the grandest, acts that a woman could perform. Do you not think so?"

I gave him both my hands:

"Most certainly I do, my friend."

In His Sweetheart's Livery

AT PRESENT she is a great lady, an elegant, intellectual woman, and a celebrated actress. But in the year 1847, when our story begins, she was a beautiful, but not very moral girl, and then it was that the young, talented Hungarian poet who was the first to discover her gifts for the stage made her acquaintance.

The slim, ardent girl, with her bright

brown hair and her large blue eyes, attracted the careless poet. He loved her, and all that was good and noble in her nature put forth fresh buds and blossoms in the sunshine of his poetic love.

They lived in an attic in the old imperial city on the Danube; she shared his poverty, his triumphs, and his pleasures, and would have become his true and faithful wife, if the Hungarian revo-

lution had not torn him from her arms.

The poet became the soldier of freedom. He followed the Magyar tricolor, and the Honved drums, while she was carried away by the current of the movement in the capital, and might have been seen discharging her musket, like a brave Amazon, at the Croats who were defending the town against Görgey's assaulting battalions.

But at last Hungary was subdued, and was governed as if it had been a conquered country.

It was said that the young poet had fallen at Temesvar. His mistress wept for him, and married another man, which was nothing either new or extraordinary. Her name was now Frau von Kubinyi, but her married life was not happy. One day she remembered that her lover had told her that she had talent for the stage, and as whatever he said had always proved correct, she separated from her husband, studied a few parts, appeared on the stage, and lo! the public, the critics, actors, and writers were lying at her feet.

She obtained a very profitable engagement, and her reputation increased with every part she played. Before the end of a year after her first appearance, she was the lioness of society. Everybody paid homage to her, and the wealthiest men tried to obtain her favors. But she remained cold and reserved, until the General commanding the district, who was a handsome man, of noble bearing, and a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, approached her.

Whether she was flattered at seeing that powerful man—before whom millions trembled, who had power over the life and death, the honor and happiness

of so many thousands—fettered by her soft curls, or whether her enigmatical heart for once really felt what true love was, suffice it to say that in a short time she was his acknowledged mistress, and her princely lover surrounded her with the luxury of an Eastern queen.

But just then a miracle occurred—the resurrection of a dead man. Frau von Kubinyi was driving through the Corso in the General's carriage; she was lying back negligently in the soft cushions, and looking carelessly at the crowd on the pavement. Then—she caught sight of a common Austrian soldier and screamed aloud.

Nobody heard that cry, which came from the depths of a woman's heart, nobody saw how pale and how excited that woman was, who usually seemed made of marble, not even the soldier who was the cause of it. He was a Hungarian poet, who, like so many other Honveds,* now wore the uniform of an Austrian soldier.

Two days later, to the poet's no small surprise, he was told to go to the General in command as orderly. When he reported himself to the adjutant, he told him to go to Frau von Kubinyi's, and to await her orders.

Our poet only knew her by report, but he hated and despised intensely the beautiful woman who had sold herself to the enemy of his country; he had no choice, however, but to obey.

When he arrived at her house, he seemed to be expected, for the porter knew his name, took him into his lodge,

*A Hungarian word meaning Defender of the Fatherland. The term *Honved* is applied to the Hungarian *Landwehr*, or militia.

and without any further explanation, told him immediately to put on the livery of his mistress, which was lying there ready for him. He ground his teeth, but resigned himself without a word to his wretched though laughable fate; it was quite clear that the actress had some purpose in making the poet wear her livery. He tried to remember whether he could formerly have offended her by his notices as a theatrical critic, but before he could arrive at any conclusion, he was told to present himself to Frau von Kubinyi. She evidently wished to enjoy his humiliation.

He was shown into a small drawing-room, which was furnished with an amount of taste and magnificence such as he had never seen before, and was told to wait. But he had not been alone many minutes, before the door-curtains were parted and Frau von Kubinyi came in, calm but deadly pale, in a splendid dressing-gown of some Turkish material, and he recognized his former mistress.

"Irma!" he exclaimed.

The cry came from his heart, and affected the heart of this pleasure-surfed woman so greatly that the next moment she was lying on the breast of the man whom she had believed to be dead, but only for a moment, for he freed himself from her.

"We are fated to meet again thus!" she began.

"Not through any fault of mine," he replied bitterly.

"And not through mine either," she said quickly; "everybody thought that you were dead, and I wept for you; that is my justification."

"You are really too kind," he replied

sarcastically. "How can you condescend to make any excuses to me? I wear your livery; you have to order, and I have to obey; our relative positions are clear enough."

Frau von Kubinyi turned away to hide her tears.

"I did not intend to hurt your feelings," he continued; "but I must confess that it would have been better for both of us, if we had not met again. But what do you mean by making me wear your livery? - Is it not enough that I have been robbed of my happiness? Does it afford you any pleasure to humiliate me as well?"

"How can you think that?" the actress exclaimed. "Ever since I discovered your unhappy lot, I have thought of nothing but the means of delivering you from it, and until I succeed in doing this, however, I can at least make it more bearable for you."

"I understand," the unhappy poet said with a sneer. "And in order to do this, you have begged your present worshiper to turn your former lover into a footman."

"What a thing to say to me!"

"Can you find any other pleasure for it? You wish to punish me for having loved you, idolized you, I suppose?" the poet continued. "So exactly like a woman! But I can perfectly well understand that the situation promises to have a fresh charm for you."

Before he could finish what he was saying, the actress quickly left the room; he could hear her sobbing, but he did not regret his words, and his contempt and hatred for her only increased when he saw the extravagance and the princely luxury with which she was sur-

rounded. But what was the use of his indignation? He was wearing her livery, he was obliged to wait upon her and to obey her, for she had the corporal's cane at her command. It really seemed as if he incurred the vengeance of the offended woman; as if the General's insolent mistress wished to make him feel her whole power; as if he were not to be spared the deepest humiliation.

The General and two of Frau von Kubinyi's friends, who were also servants of the Muses, for one was a ballet dancer and the other an actress, had come to tea, and he was to wait on them.

While it was being made, he heard them laughing in the next room. The blood flew to his head when the butler opened the door and Frau von Kubinyi appeared on the General's arm. She did not, however, look at her new footman, her former lover, triumphantly or contemptuously, but gave him a glance of the deepest commiseration.

Could he, after all, have wronged her?

Hatred and love, contempt and jealousy were struggling in his breast, and when he had to fill the glasses, the bottle shook in his hand.

"Is this the man?" the General said, looking at him closely.

Frau von Kubinyi nodded.

"He was evidently not born for a footman," the General added.

"And still less for a soldier," the actress observed.

These words fell heavily on the unfortunate poet's heart, but she was evidently taking his part, and trying to rescue him from his terrible position.

Suspicion, however, once more gained the day.

"She is tired of all pleasures, and satiated with enjoyment," he said to himself; "she requires excitement and it amuses her to see the man whom she formerly loved, and who, as she knows, still loves her, tremble before her. And when she pleases, she can see me tremble; not for my life, but for fear of the disgrace which she can inflict upon me, at any moment, if it should give her any pleasure."

But suddenly the actress gave him a look, which was so sad and so imploring, that he looked down in confusion.

From that time he remained in her house without performing any duties, and without receiving any orders from her; in fact he never saw her, and did not venture to ask after her. Two months had passed in this way, when the General unexpectedly sent for him. He waited, with many others, in the ante-room. The General came back from parade, saw him, and beckoned him to follow him, and as soon as they were alone, said:

"You are free, as you have been allowed to purchase your discharge."

"Good heavens!" the poet stammered, "how am I to—"

"That is already done," the General replied. "You are free."

"How is it possible? How can I thank your Excellency!"

"You owe me no thanks," he replied; "Frau von Kubinyi bought you out."

The poor poet's heart seemed to stop; he could not speak, nor even stammer a word; but with a low bow, he rushed out and tore wildly through the streets, until he reached the mansion of the woman whom he had so misunderstood,

quite out of breath; he must see her again, and throw himself at her feet.

"Where are you going to?" the porter asked him.

"To Frau von Kubinyi's."

"She is not here.

"Not here?"

"She has gone away."

"Gone away? Where to?"

"She started for Paris two hours ago."

An Unfortunate Likeness

IT WAS during one of those sudden changes of the electric light, which at one time throws rays of exquisite pale pink, of a liquid gold filtered through the light hair of a woman, and at another, rays of bluish hue with strange tints, such as the sky assumes at twilight, in which the women with their bare shoulders looked like living flowers—it was, I say, on the night of the first of January at Montonirail's, the dainty painter of tall, undulating figures, of bright dresses of Parisian prettiness—that tall Pescarelle, whom some called "Pussy," though I do not know why, suddenly said in a low voice:

"Well, people were not altogether mistaken, in fact, were only half wrong when they coupled my name with that of pretty Lucy Ponelle. She had caught me, just as a birdcatcher on a frosty morning catches an imprudent wren on a limed twig—in fact, she might have done whatever she liked with me.

"I was under the charm of her enigmatical and mocking smile, that smile in which her teeth gleamed cruelly between her red lips, and glistened as if they were ready to bite and to heighten the pleasure of the most delightful, the most voluptuous, kiss by pain.

"I loved everything in her—her feline suppleness, her languid looks which emerged from her half-closed lids, full of promises and temptation, her somewhat extreme elegance, and her hands, those long, delicate white hands, with blue veins, like the bloodless hands of a female saint in a stained glass window, and her slender fingers, on which only the large blooddrop of a ruby glittered.

"I would have given her all my remaining youth and vigor to have laid my burning hands upon the back of her cool, round neck, and to feel that bright, silk, golden mane enveloping me and caressing my skin. I was never tired of hearing her disdainful, petulant voice, those vibrations which sounded as if they proceeded from clear glass, whose music, at times, became hoarse, harsh, and fierce, like the loud, sonorous calls of the Valkyries.

"Good heavens! to be her lover, to be her chattel, to belong to her, to devote one's whole existence to her, to spend one's last half-penny and to sink in misery, only to have the glory and the happiness of possessing her splendid beauty, the sweetness of her kisses, the pink and the white of her demonlike

soul all to myself, if only for a few months!

"It makes you laugh, I know, to think that I should have been caught like that—I who give such good, prudent advice to my friends—I who fear love as I do those quicksands and shoals which appear at low tide and in which one may be swallowed up and disappear!

"But who can answer for himself, who can defend himself against such a danger, as the magnetic attraction that inheres in such a woman? Nevertheless, I got cured and perfectly cured, and that quite accidentally. This is how the enchantment, which was apparently so infrangible, was broken.

"On the first night of a play, I was sitting in the stalls close to Lucy, whose mother had accompanied her, as usual. They occupied the front of a box, side by side. From some unsurmountable attraction, I never ceased looking at the woman whom I loved with all the force of my being. I feasted my eyes on her beauty, I saw nobody except her in the theater, and did not listen to the piece that was being performed on the stage.

"Suddenly, however, I felt as if I had received a blow from a dagger in my heart, and I had an insane hallucination. Lucy had moved, and her pretty head was in profile, in the same attitude and with the same lines as her mother. I do not know what shadow or what play of light had hardened and altered the color of her delicate features, effacing their ideal prettiness, but the more I looked at them both, at the one who was young and the one who was old, the greater the distressing resemblance became.

"I saw Lucy growing older and older, striving against those accumulating years which bring wrinkles in the face, produce a double chin and crow's-feet, and spoil the mouth. *They almost looked like twins.*

"I suffered so, that I thought I should go mad. Yet in spite of myself, instead of shaking off this feeling and making my escape out of the theater, far away into the noise and life of the boulevards, I persisted in looking at the other, at the old one, in examining her, in judging her, in dissecting her with my eyes. I got excited over her flabby cheeks, over those ridiculous dimples, that were half filled up, over that treble chin, that dyed hair, those lusterless eyes, and that nose, which was a caricature of Lucy's beautiful, attractive little nose.

"I had a prescience of the future. I loved her, and I should love her more and more every day, that little sorceress who had so despotically and so quickly conquered me. I should not allow any participation or any intrigue from the day she gave herself to me, and once intimately connected, who could tell whether, just as I was defending myself against it most, the legitimate termination—marriage—might not come?

"Why not give one's name to a woman whom one loves, and whom one trusts? The reason was that I should be tied to a disfigured, ugly creature, with whom I should not venture to be seen in public. My friends would leer at her with laughter in their eyes, and with pity in their hearts for the man who was accompanying those remains.

"And so, as soon as the curtain had

fallen, without saying good day or good evening, I had myself driven to the Moulin Rouge

* * * * *

“Well,” Florise d’Anglet exclaimed, “I shall never take mamma to the theater with me again, for the men are really going crazy!”

A Night in Whitechapel

MY FRIEND Ledantec and I were each twenty-five, and we were visiting London for the first time in our lives. It was a Saturday evening in December, cold and foggy, and I think that this combination is more than enough to explain why my friend Ledantec and I managed to get abominably drunk, though, to tell the truth, we were not experiencing any discomfort from it. On the contrary, we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss. We did not speak, certainly, for we were incapable of doing so, but then we had no inclination for conversation. What would be the good of it? We could easily read all our thoughts in each other’s eyes, the more so because we knew that we were thinking about nothing whatever.

It was not, however, in order to arrive at that state of delicious, intellectual nullity, that we had gone to mysterious Whitechapel. We had gone into the first public-house we saw, with the firm intention of studying manners and customs there,—not to mention morals,—as spectators, artists, and philosophers, but in the second public-house we entered, we ourselves began to resemble the objects of our investigations, that is to say, sponges soaked in alcohol. Between one public-house and the other, the outer air seemed to squeeze those

sponges dry, and thus we rolled from public-house to public-house, till at last the sponges could hold no more.

Consequently, we had for some time bidden farewell to our studies in morals; they were now limited to two impressions: zigzags through the darkness outside, and a gleam of light outside the public houses. As to the imbibition of brandy, whisky, and gin, that was done mechanically, and our stomachs scarcely noticed it.

But what strange beings we had elbowed with during our long stoppages! What a number of faces to be remembered; what clothes, what attitudes, what talk, and what squalor!

At first we tried to note these things exactly in our memory, but there were so many of them, and our brains got muddled so quickly, that just then we had no very clear recollection of anything or anybody. Even objects immediately before us passed by in vague, dusky phantasmagoria, confounded with things farther away in an inextricable manner. The world became a sort of kaleidoscope to us, seen in a dream through the penumbra of an aquarium.

Suddenly we were roused from this state of somnolence, awakened as if by a blow on the chest, forced to fix our attention on what we saw, for, amid this

whirl of strange sights, one stranger than all attracted our eyes, and seemed to say: "Look at me."

It was at the open door of a public house. A ray of light streamed into the street through the half-open door, and the revealing ray fell right on to the specter that had just risen up there, dumb and motionless.

It was indeed a pitiful and terrible specter, and, above all, most real, as it stood out boldly against the dark background of the street, which it made darker still!

Young? yes, the woman was certainly young. There could be no doubt about that, when one looked at her smooth skin, her smiling mouth showing white teeth, and the firm bust which could be plainly noted under her thin dress.

But then, how explain her perfectly white hair, not gray or growing gray, but absolutely white, as white as any octogenarian's?

And then her eyes, those eyes beneath a smooth brow, were surely the eyes of an old woman? Certainly they were, and of how old a woman you could not tell, for it must have taken years of trouble and sorrow, of tears and of sleepless nights, and a long existence, thus to dull, wear out and roughen those vitreous pupils.

Vitreous? Not exactly that. For roughened glass still retains a dull and milky brightness, a recollection, as it were, of its former transparency. But these eyes seemed rather to be of metal which had turned rusty, and really, if pewter could rust, I should have compared them to pewter covered with rust. They had the dead color of pewter, and

at the same time emitted a glance which was the color of reddish water.

But it was not until some time later that I tried to define them approximately by retrospective analysis. At that moment, being altogether incapable of such effort, I could only realize in my own mind the idea of extreme decrepitude and horrible old age which they produced in my imagination.

Have I had said that they were set in very puffy eyelids, which had no lashes whatever, and that on her unwrinkled forehead there was not a vestige of eyebrow? When I tell you this, and emphasize the dullness of their look beneath the hair of an octogenarian, it is not surprising that Ledantec and I said in a low voice at the sight of this woman, who from her physique must have been young:

"Oh! poor, poor old woman!"

Her age was further accentuated by the terrible poverty revealed by her dress. If she had been better dressed, her youthful looks would, perhaps, have struck us more; but her thin shawl, which was all that she had over her chemise, her single petticoat which was full of holes and almost in rags, not nearly reaching to her bare feet, her straw hat with ragged feathers and with ribbons of no particular color through age, seemed altogether so ancient, so prodigiously antique that we were deceived.

From what remote, superannuated, and obsolete period did they all spring? You could not guess, and by a perfectly natural association of ideas, you would infer that the unfortunate creature was as old as her clothes were. Now, by "you" I mean by Ledantec and myself,

that is to say, by two men who were abominably drunk and who were arguing with the peculiar logic of intoxication.

Under the softening influence of alcohol we looked at the vague smile on those lips hiding the teeth of a child, without considering the youthful beauty of the latter. We saw nothing but her fixed and almost idiotic smile, which no longer contrasted with the dull expression of her face, but, on the contrary, strengthened it. For in spite of her teeth, to us it was the smile of an old woman, and as for myself, I was really pleased at my acuteness when I inferred that this grandmother with such pale lips had the teeth of a young girl. Still, thanks to the softening influence of alcohol, I was not angry with her for this artifice. I even thought it particularly praiseworthy, since, after all, the poor creature thus conscientiously pursued her calling, which was to seduce men. For there was no possible doubt that this grandmother was nothing more nor less than a prostitute.

And then, drunk! Horribly drunk, much more drunk than Ledantec and I were, for we really could manage to say: "Oh! Pity the poor, poor old woman!" while she was incapable of articulating a single syllable, of making a gesture, or even of imparting a gleam of promise, a furtive flash of allurements to her eyes. With her hands crossed on her stomach, and leaning against the front of the public house, her whole body as stiff as if in a fit of catalepsy, she had nothing alluring about her, save her sad smile. This inspired us with all the more pity because she was even more tipsy than we were, and so, by an identical, spontaneous movement, we each

seized her by an arm to take her into the public-house with us.

To our great astonishment she resisted, and sprang back into the shadow again, out of the ray of light which came through the door. At the same time, she started off through the darkness dragging us with her, for she was clinging to our arms. We went along with her without speaking, not knowing where we were going, but without the least uneasiness on that score. Only, when she suddenly burst into violent sobs as she walked, Ledantec and I began to sob in unison.

The cold and the fog had suddenly congested our brains again, and we had again lost all precise consciousness of our acts, our thoughts, and our sensations. Our sobs had nothing of grief in them; we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss, and I can remember that at that moment it was no longer the exterior world at which I seemed to be looking as through the penumbra of an aquarium; it was myself, a self composed of three, which was changing into something that was floating adrift in something, though what it was I did not know, composed as it was of impalpable fog and intangible water. But it was exquisitely delightful.

From that moment I remember nothing more until something happened which had the effect of a clap of thunder on me, and made me sober in an instant.

Ledantec was standing in front of me, his face convulsed with horror, his hair standing on end, and his eyes staring out of his head. He shouted to me:

"Let us escape! Let us escape!" Whereupon I opened my eyes wide, and

found myself lying on the floor, in a room into which daylight was shining. I saw some rags hanging against the wall, two chairs, a broken jug lying on the floor by my side, and in a corner a wretched bed on which a woman was lying, who was no doubt dead, for her head was hanging over the side, and her long white hair reached almost to my feet.

With a bound I was up, like Ledantec.

"What!" I said to him, while my teeth chattered: "Did you kill her?"

"No, no," he replied. "But that makes no difference; let us be off."

I felt completely sober by that time, but I did think that he was still suffering somewhat from the effects of last night's drinking; otherwise, why should he wish to escape? Pity for the unfortunate woman forced me to say:

"What is the matter with her? If she is ill, we must look after her."

I went over to the wretched bed, in order to put her head back on the pillow, and discovered that she was neither dead nor ill, but only sound asleep. I also noticed that she was quite young. She still wore that idiotic smile, but her teeth were her own and those of a girl. Her smooth skin and firm bust showed that she was not more than sixteen; perhaps not so much.

"There! You see it, you can see it!" said Ledantec. "Let us be off."

He tried to drag me out. He was still drunk; I could see it by his feverish movements, his trembling hands, and his nervous looks. Then he said.

"I slept beside the old woman; but she is not old. Look at her; look at her; yes, she is old after all!"

And he lifted up her long hair by

handfuls; it was like handfuls of white silk, and then he added, evidently in a sort of frenzy, which made me fear an attack of delirium tremens: "To think that I have begotten children, three, four children—who knows how many children, all in one night! And they were born immediately, and have grown up already! Let us be off."

Decidedly it was an attack of madness. Poor Ledantec! What could I do for him? I took his arm and tried to calm him, but he thought that I was going to try and make him go over to her again, and he pushed me away and exclaimed with tears in his voice: "If you do not believe me, look under the bed; the children are there; they are there, I tell you. Look here, just look here."

He threw himself down flat on his stomach, and actually pulled out one, two, three, four children, who had hidden under the bed. I do not exactly know whether they were boys or girls, but all, like the sleeping woman, had white hair, the hair of octogenarians.

Was I still drunk, like Ledantec, or was I mad? What was the meaning of this strange hallucination? I hesitated for a moment, and shook myself to be sure that I was awake.

No, no, I had all my wits about me, and in reality saw that horrible lot of little brats. They all had their faces in their hands, and were crying and squalling; then one of them suddenly jumped on to the bed; all the others followed his example, and the woman woke up.

And there we stood, while those five pairs of eyes, without eyebrows or eye-

lashes, eyes of the color of dull pewter, with pupils the color of red water, were steadily fixed on us.

"Let us be off! let us be off!" Ledantec repeated, loosing his hold of me. This time I paid attention to what he

said, and after throwing some small change on to the floor, I followed him, to make him understand, when he became quite sober, that he saw before him a poor Albino unfortunate, who had several brothers and sisters.

Lost!

LOVE is stronger than death, and consequently, also, than the greatest disaster.

A young and by no means bad-looking son of Palestine, one of the barons of the Almanac of the *Ghetto*,* who had left the field covered with wounds in the last general engagement on the Stock Exchange, used very frequently to visit the Universal Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, in order to divert his thoughts, and to console himself amid the varied scenes and the numerous objects of attraction there. One day, in the Russian section, he met a newly-married couple, who had a very old coat of arms, but on the other hand, a very modest income.

This latter circumstance frequently emboldened the stockbroker to make secret overtures to the delightful little lady; overtures which might have fascinated certain Viennese actresses, but were an insult to a respectable woman. The Baroness, whose name appeared in the "Almanach de Gotha,"† felt something very like hatred for the man from the *Ghetto*, and for a long time her pretty little head had been full of various plans of revenge.

The stockbroker, who was really and even passionately in love with her, got

close to her one day in the Exhibition buildings. He did this the more easily through the flight of the little woman's husband who had scented extravagance as soon as she went up to the show-case of a Russian fur-dealer, before which she remained standing in rapture.

"Do look at that lovely fur," the Baroness said, while her dark eyes expressed her pleasure; "I must have it."

But she looked at the white ticket on which the price was marked.

"Four thousand rubles," she said in despair; "that is about six thousand florins."‡

"Certainly," he replied, "but what of that? It is a sum not worth mentioning in the presence of such a charming lady."

"But my husband is not in a position—"

"Be less cruel than usual for once," the man from the *Ghetto* said to the young woman in a low voice, "and allow me to lay this sable skin at your feet."

*The Jews' quarter in some towns.

†An Almanac published early in Gotha, which contains a full account and genealogies of reigning families, mediatized princes, princely, non-reigning families, etc., etc.

‡\$3,000.

"I presume that you are joking."

"Not I!"

"I think you must be joking, as I cannot think that you intend to insult me."

"But, Baroness, I love you."

"That is one reason more why you should not make me angry."

"But—"

"This is outrageous," cried the energetic little woman; "I could flog you like 'Venus in the Fur'* did her slave."

"Let me be your slave," the Stock Exchange baron replied ardently, "and I will gladly put up with everything from you. Really, in this sable cloak, and with a whip in your hand, you would make a most lovely picture of the heroine of that story."

The Baroness looked at the man for a moment with a peculiar smile.

"Then if I were to listen to you favorably, you would let me flog you?" said she after a pause.

"With pleasure."

"Very well," she replied quickly. "You will let me give you twenty-five cuts with a whip, and I will be yours after the twenty-fifth blow."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Fully."

The man from the *Ghetto* took her hand, and pressed it ardently to his lips.

"When may I come?"

"To-morrow evening at eight o'clock."

"And I may bring the sable cloak and the whip with me?"

"No, I will see about that myself."

Next evening the enamored stock-broker came to the abode of the charming little Baroness, and found her alone, lying on a couch, wrapped in dark fur

and holding a dog whip in her small hand, which the man from the *Ghetto* kissed.

"You know our agreement," she began.

"Of course I do," the Stock Exchange baron replied. "I am to allow you to give me twenty-five cuts with the whip, and after the twenty-fifth you will listen to me."

"Yes, but I am going to tie your hands first of all."

The amorous baron quietly allowed this new Delila to tie his hands behind him, and then at her bidding, he knelt down before her, and she raised her whip and hit him hard.

"Oh! That hurts most confoundedly," he exclaimed.

"I mean it to hurt you," she said with a mocking laugh, and went on thrashing him without mercy. At last the poor fool groaned with pain, but he consoled himself with the thought that each blow brought him nearer to his happiness.

At the twenty-fourth cut, she threw the whip down.

"That only makes twenty-four," the beaten and would-be Don Juan remarked.

"I will make you a present of the twenty-fifth," she said with a laugh.

"And now you are mine, altogether mine," he exclaimed ardently.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Have I not let you beat me?"

"Certainly; but I promised you to grant your wish after the twenty-fifth blow, and you have only received twenty-four," the cruel little atom of

*One of Sacher-Masoch's novels.

virtue cried, "and I have witnesses to prove it."

With these words she drew back the curtains over the door, and her husband, followed by two other gentlemen came out of the next room, smiling. For a

moment the stockbroker remained speechless on his knees before his Delila; then he gave a deep sigh, and sadly uttered that one, most significant word:

"Lost!"

A Country Excursion

FOR five months they had been talking of going to lunch at some country restaurant in the neighborhood of Paris, on Madame Dufour's birthday, and as they were looking forward very impatiently to the outing, they had risen very early that morning. Monsieur Dufour had borrowed the milkman's tilted cart, and drove himself. It was a very neat, two-wheeled conveyance, with a hood, and in it Madame Dufour, resplendent in a wonderful, sherry-colored silk dress, sat by the side of her husband.

The old grandmother and the daughter were accommodated with two chairs, and a yellow-haired youth, of whom, however, nothing was to be seen except his head, lay at the bottom of the trap.

When they got to the bridge of Neuilly, Monsieur Dufour said: "Here we are in the country at last!" At that warning, his wife grew sentimental about the beauties of nature. When they got to the crossroads at Courbevoie, they were seized with admiration for the tremendous view down there: on the right was the spire of Argenteuil church, above it rose the hills of Sannois and the mill of Orgemont, while on the left, the aqueduct of Marly stood out against the clear morning sky. In the

distance they could see the terrace of Saint-Germain, and opposite to them, at the end of a low chain of hills, the new fort of Corneilles. Afar—a very long way off, beyond the plains and villages—one could see the somber green of the forests.

The sun was beginning to shine in their faces, the dust got into their eyes, and on either side of the road there stretched an interminable tract of bare, ugly country, which smelled unpleasantly. You would have thought that it had been ravaged by a pestilence which had even attacked the buildings, for skeletons of dilapidated and deserted houses, or small cottages left in an unfinished state, as if the contractors had not been paid, reared their four roofless walls on each side.

Here and there tall factory-chimneys rose up from the barren soil, the only vegetation on that putrid land, where the spring breezes wafted an odor of petroleum and soot, mingled with another smell that was even still less agreeable. At last, however, they crossed the Seine a second time. It was delightful on the bridge; the river sparkled in the sun, and they had a feeling of quiet satisfaction and enjoyment in drinking

in purer air, not impregnated by the black smoke of factories, nor by the miasma from the deposits of night-soil. A man whom they met told them that the name of the place was Bézons; so Monsieur Dufour pulled up, and read the attractive announcement outside an eating-house:

"Restaurant Poulin, stews and fried fish, private rooms, arbors, and swings."

"Well! Madame Dufour, will this suit you? Will you make up your mind at last?"

She read the announcement in her turn, and then looked at the house for a time.

It was a white country inn, built by the roadside, and through the open door she could see the bright zinc of the counter, at which two workmen out for the day were sitting. At last she made up her mind, and said:

"Yes, this will do; and, besides, there is a view."

So they drove into a large yard studded with trees, behind the inn, which was only separated from the river by the towing-path, and got out. The husband sprang out first, and held out his arms for his wife. As the step was very high, Madame Dufour, in order to reach him, had to show the lower part of her limbs, whose former slenderness had disappeared in fat. Monsieur Dufour, who was already getting excited by the country air; pinched her calf, and then, taking her in his arms, set her on to the ground, as if she had been some enormous bundle. She shook the dust out of the silk dress, and then looked round, to see in what sort of a place she was.

She was a stout woman, of about

thirty-six full-blown and delightful to look at. She could hardly breathe, as she was laced too tightly, which forced the heaving mass of her superabundant bosom up to her double chin. Next, the girl put her hand on to her father's shoulder, and jumped lightly down. The youth with the yellow hair had got down by stepping on the wheel, and he helped Monsieur Dufour to get the grandmother out. Then they unharnessed the horse, which they tied up to a tree, and the carriage fell back, with both shafts in the air. The man and boy took off their coats, washed their hands in a pail of water, and then joined the ladies, who had already taken possession of the swings.

Mademoiselle Dufour was trying to swing herself standing up, but she could not succeed in getting a start. She was a pretty girl of about eighteen; one of those women who suddenly excite your desire when you meet them in the street, and who leave you with a vague feeling of uneasiness and of excited senses. She was tall, had a small waist and large hips, with a dark skin, very large eyes, and very black hair. Her dress clearly marked the outlines of her firm, full figure, which was accentuated by the motion of her hips as she tried to swing herself higher. Her arms were stretched over her head to hold the rope, so that her bosom rose at every movement she made. Her hat, which a gust of wind had blown off, was hanging behind her, and as the swing gradually rose higher and higher, she showed her delicate limbs up to the knees each time, and the wind from the perfumed petticoats, more heady than the fumes of wine, blew into the faces

of her father and friend, who were looking at her in admiration.

Sitting in the other swing, Madame Dufour kept saying in a monotonous voice:

"Cyprian, come and swing me; do come and swing me, Cyprian!"

At last he complied, and turning up his shirt-sleeves, as if he intended to work very hard, with much difficulty he set his wife in motion. She clutched the two ropes, and held her legs out straight, so as not to touch the ground. She enjoyed feeling giddy from the motion of the swing, and her whole figure shook like a jelly on a dish, but as she went higher and higher, she grew too giddy and got frightened. Every time she was coming back, she uttered a shriek, which made all the little urchins come round, and, down below, beneath the garden hedge, she vaguely saw a row of mischievous heads, making various grimaces as they laughed.

When a servant girl came out, they ordered lunch.

"Some fried fish, a stewed rabbit, salad, and dessert," Madame Dufour said, with an important air.

"Bring two quarts of beer and a bottle of claret," her husband said.

"We will have lunch on the grass," the girl added.

The grandmother, who had an affection for cats, had been petting one that belonged to the house, and had been bestowing the most affectionate words on it, for the last ten minutes. The animal, no doubt secretly pleased by her attentions, kept close to the good woman, but just out of reach of her hand, and quietly walked round the trees, against

which she rubbed herself, with her tail up, purring with pleasure.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the youth with the yellow hair, who was ferreting about, "here are two swell boats!" They all went to look at them, and saw two beautiful skiffs in a wooden boathouse, which were as beautifully finished as if they had been objects of luxury. They were moored side by side, like two tall, slender girls, in their narrow shining length, and aroused in one a wish to float in them on warm summer mornings and evenings, along flower-covered banks of the river, where the trees dip their branches into the water, where the rushes are continually rustling in the breeze, and where the swift kingfishers dart about like flashes of blue lightning.

The whole family looked at them with great respect.

"They are indeed two swell boats," Monsieur Dufour repeated gravely, and he examined them closely, commenting on them like a connoisseur. He had been in the habit of rowing in his younger days, he said, and when he had that in his hands—and he went through the action of pulling the oars—he did not care a fig for anybody. He had beaten more than one Englishman formerly at the Joinville regattas. He grew quite excited at last, and offered to make a bet that in a boat like that he could row six miles an hour, without exerting himself.

"Lunch is ready," said the waitress, appearing at the entrance to the boathouse. They all hurried off, but two young men were already lunching at the best place, which Madame Dufour had chosen in her mind as her seat. No doubt they were the owners of the skiffs, for they

were dressed in boating costume. They were stretched out, almost lying on chairs, and were sunburned, and had on flannel trousers and thin cotton jerseys, with short sleeves, which showed their bare arms, which were as strong as blacksmiths'. They were two strong young fellows, who thought a great deal of their vigor, and who showed in all their movements that elasticity and grace of limb which can only be acquired by exercise, and which is so different to the awkwardness with which the same continual work stamps the mechanic.

They exchanged a rapid smile when they saw the mother, and then a look on seeing the daughter.

"Let us give up our place," one of them said; "it will make us acquainted with them."

The other got up immediately, and holding his black and red boating-cap in his hand, he politely offered the ladies the only shady place in the garden. With many excuses they accepted, and so that it might be more rural, they sat on the grass, without either tables or chairs.

The two young men took their plates, knives, forks, etc., to a table a little way off, and began to eat again. Their bare arms, which they showed continually, rather embarrassed the young girl, who even pretended to turn her head aside, and not to see them. But Madame Dufour, who was rather bolder, tempted by feminine curiosity, looked at them every moment, and no doubt compared them with the secret unsightliness of her husband. She had squatted herself on the ground with her legs tucked under her, after the manner of tailors, and kept wriggling about continually,

under the pretext that ants were crawling about her somewhere. Monsieur Dufour, whom the politeness of the strangers had put into rather a bad temper, was trying to find a comfortable position, which he did not, however, succeed in doing, while the youth with the yellow hair was eating as silently as an ogre.

"It is lovely weather, Monsieur," the stout lady said to one of the boating-men. She wished to be friendly, because they had given up their place.

"It is, indeed, Madame," he replied; "do you often go into the country?"

"Oh! Only once or twice a year, to get a little fresh air; and you, Monsieur?"

"I come and sleep here every night."

"Oh! That must be very nice?"

"Certainly it is, Madame." And he gave them such a practical account of his daily life, that in the hearts of these shopkeepers, who were deprived of the meadows, and who longed for country walks, it roused that innate love of nature, which they all felt so strongly the whole year round, behind the counter in their shop.

The girl raised her eyes and looked at the oarsman with emotion, and Monsieur Dufour spoke for the first time.

"It is indeed a happy life," he said. And then he added: "A little more rabbit, my dear?"

"No, thank you," she replied, and turning to the young men again, and pointing to their arms, asked: "Do you never feel cold like that?"

They both laughed, and amazed the family by telling of the enormous fatigue they could endure, of bathing while in a state of tremendous perspira-

tion, of rowing in the fog at night, and they struck their chests violently, to show how they sounded.

"Ah! You look very strong," the husband said, and he did not talk any more of the time when he used to beat the English. The girl was looking at them askance now, and the young fellow with the yellow hair, as he had swallowed some wine the wrong way, and was coughing violently, bespattered Madame Dufour's sherry-colored silk dress. Madame got angry, and sent for some water to wash the spots.

Meanwhile it had grown unbearably hot, the sparkling river looked like a blaze of fire and the fumes of the wine were getting into their heads. Monsieur Dufour, who had a violent hiccough, had unbuttoned his waistcoat and the top of his trousers, while his wife, who felt choking, was gradually unfastening her dress. The youth was shaking his yellow wig in a happy frame of mind, and kept helping himself to wine, and as the old grandmother felt drunk, she endeavored to be very stiff and dignified. As for the girl, she showed nothing except a peculiar brightness in her eyes, while the brown skin on the cheeks became more rosy.

The coffee finished them off; they spoke of singing, and each of them sang, or repeated a couplet, which the others repeated enthusiastically. Then they got up with some difficulty, and while the two women, who were rather dizzy, were getting some fresh air, the two males, who were altogether drunk, were performing gymnastic tricks. Heavy, limp, and with scarlet faces, they hung awkwardly on to the iron rings, without being able to raise themselves, while

their shirts were continually threatening to part company with their trousers, and to flap in the wind like flags.

Meanwhile, the two boating-men had got their skiffs into the water. They came back, and politely asked the ladies whether they would like a row.

"Would you like one, Monsieur Dufour?" his wife exclaimed. "Please come!"

He merely gave her a drunken look, without understanding what she said. Then one of the rowers came up, with two fishing-rods in his hand; and the hope of catching a gudgeon, that great aim of the Parisian shopkeeper, made Dufour's dull eyes gleam. He politely allowed them to do whatever they liked, while he sat in the shade, under the bridge, with his feet dangling over the river, by the side of the young man with the yellow hair, who was sleeping soundly close to him.

One of the boating-men made a martyr of himself, and took the mother.

"Let us go to the little wood on the Ile aux Anglais!" he called out, as he rowed off. The other skiff went slower, for the rower was looking at his companion so intently, that he thought of nothing else. His emotion paralyzed his strength, while the girl, who was sitting on the steerer's seat, gave herself up to the enjoyment of being on the water. She felt disinclined to think, felt a lassitude in her limbs, a complete self-relaxation, as if she were intoxicated. She had become very flushed, and breathed pantingly. The effect of the wine, increased by the extreme heat, made all the trees on the bank seem to bow, as she passed. A vague wish for enjoyment, a fermentation of her blood,

seemed to pervade her whole body, and she was also a little agitated by this *tête-à-tête* on the water, in a place which seemed depopulated by the heat, with this young man, who thought her so pretty, whose looks seemed to caress her skin, and whose eyes were as penetrating and exciting as the sun's rays.

Their inability to speak increased their emotion, and they looked about them. At last he made an effort and asked her name.

"Henriette," she said.

"Why! My name is Henri," he replied. The sound of their voices calmed them, and they looked at the banks. The other skiff had gone ahead of them, and seemed to be waiting for them. The rower called out:

"We will meet you in the wood; we are going as far as Robinson's,* because Madame Dufour is thirsty." Then he bent over his oars again and rowed off so quickly that he was soon out of sight.

Meanwhile, a continual roar, which they had heard for some time, came nearer, and the river itself seemed to shiver, as if the dull noise were rising from its depths.

"What is that noise?" she asked. It was the noise of the weir, which cut the river in two, at the island. He was explaining it to her, when above the noise of the waterfall they heard the song of a bird, which seemed a long way off.

"Listen!" he said; "the nightingales are singing during the day, so the females must be sitting."

A nightingale! She had never heard one before, and the idea of listening to one roused visions of poetic tenderness

in her heart. A nightingale! That is to say, the invisible witness of the lover's interview which Juliette invoked on her balcony†; that celestial music which is attuned to human kisses; that eternal inspirer of all those languorous romances which open idealized visions to the poor, tender, little hearts of sensitive girls!

She wanted to hear a nightingale.

"We must not make a noise," her companion said, "and then we can go into the wood, and sit down close to it."

The skiff seemed to glide. They saw the trees on the island, the banks of which were so low that they could look into the depths of the thickets. They stopped, he made the boat fast, Henriette took hold of Henri's arm, and they went beneath the trees.

"Stoop," he said, so she bent down, and they went into an inextricable thicket of creepers, leaves, and reed-grass, which formed an impenetrable retreat, and which the young man laughingly called "his private room."

Just above their heads, perched in one of the trees which hid them, the bird was still singing. He uttered shakes and *roulades*, and then long, vibrating sounds that filled the air and seemed to lose themselves in the distance, across the level country, through that burning silence which hung low upon the whole country round. They did not speak for fear of frightening the bird away. They were sitting close together, and slowly Henri's arm stole round the girl's waist

*A well-known restaurant on the banks of the Seine, much frequented by the bourgeoisie.

†"Romeo and Juliet," Act III., Scene V.

and squeezed it gently. She took that daring hand, but without anger, and kept removing it whenever he put it round her; not, however, feeling at all embarrassed by this caress, just as if it had been something quite natural which she was resisting just as naturally.

She was listening to the bird in ecstasy. She felt an infinite longing for happiness, for some sudden demonstration of tenderness, for a revelation of divine poesy. She felt such a softening at her heart, and such a relaxation of her nerves, that she began to cry, without knowing why. The young man was now straining her close to him, and she did not remove his arm; she did not think of it. Suddenly the nightingale stopped, and a voice called out in the distance:

"Henriette!"

"Do not reply," he said in a low voice, "you will drive the bird away."

But she had no idea of doing so, and they remained in the same position for some time. Madame Dufour had sat down somewhere or other, for from time to time they heard the stout lady break out into little bursts of laughter.

The girl was still crying; she was filled with strange sensations. Henri's head was on her shoulder, and suddenly he kissed her on the lips. She was surprised and angry, and, to avoid him, she stood up.

They were both very pale when they quitted their grassy retreat. The blue sky looked dull to them, the ardent sun was clouded over to their eyes, they perceived not the solitude and the silence. They walked quickly side by side, without speaking or touching each other, appearing to be irreconcilable enemies,

as if disgust had sprung up between them, and hatred between their souls. From time to time Henriette called out: "Mamma!"....

By and by they heard a noise in a thicket, and Madame Dufour appeared, looking rather confused, and her companion's face was wrinkled with smiles that he could not check.

Madame Dufour took his arm, and they returned to the boats. Henri went on first, still without speaking, by the girl's side, and at last they got back to Bézons. Monsieur Dufour, who had sobered up, was waiting for them very impatiently, while the youth with the yellow hair was having a mouthful of something to eat before leaving the inn. The carriage was in the yard, with the horse in, and the grandmother, who had already got in, was frightened at the thought of being overtaken by night, before they got back to Paris, the outskirts not being safe.

The young men shook hands with them, and the Dufour family drove off.

"Good-bye, until we meet again!" the oarsmen cried, and the answers they got were a sigh and a tear.

* * * * *

Two months later, as Henri was going along the Rue des Martyrs, he saw "Dufour, Ironmonger," over a door. So he went in, and saw the stout lady sitting at the counter. They recognized each other immediately, and after an interchange of polite greetings, he inquired after them all.

"And how is Mademoiselle Henriette?" he inquired, specially.

"Very well, thank you; she is married."

"Ah!" Mastering his feelings, he added: "To whom was she married?"

"To that young man who went with us, you know; he has joined us in business."

"I remember him, perfectly."

He was going out, feeling unhappy, though scarcely knowing why, when Madame called him back.

"And how is your friend?" she asked, rather shyly.

"He is very well, thank you."

The Relics

THEY had given him a grand public funeral, like they do to victorious soldiers who have added some dazzling pages to the glorious annals of their country, who have restored courage to desponding hearts and cast over other nations the proud shadow of their country's flag, like a yoke under which those go who are no longer to have a country, or liberty.

During a whole bright, calm night, when falling stars made people think of unknown metamorphoses and the transmigration of souls, tall cavalry soldiers in their cuirasses, sitting as motionless as statues on their horses, had watched by the dead man's coffin, which was resting, covered with wreaths, under the porch of the heroes, every stone of which is engraved with the name of a brave man and of a battle.

The whole town was in mourning, as if it had lost the only object that had possession of its heart and love. The crowd went silently and thoughtfully down the avenue of the Champs-Élysées, and almost fought for the commemorative medals and the common portraits which hawkers were selling, or climbed upon the stands which street boys had erected here and there, from

which they could see over the heads of the crowd.

The Place de la Concorde had something solemn about it, with its circle of statues hung from head to foot with long crape coverings, which looked in the distance like widows, weeping and praying.

According to his last wish, Jean Ramel had been conveyed to the Panthéon in the wretched paupers' hearse, which takes them to the common grave, behind the shambling trot of some thin and broken-winded horse.

That dreadful, black conveyance without any drapery, without plumes and without flowers, followed by Ministers and deputies, by several regiments with their bands, with their flags flying above the helmets and the sabers, by children from the national schools, by delegates from the provinces and by an innumerable crowd of men in blouses, of women, of shopkeepers from every quarter, had a most theatrical effect. Standing on the steps of the Panthéon, at the foot of the massive columns of the portico, the orators successively descanted on Ramel's apotheosis, tried to make their voices dominate over the noise, emphasized their pompous periods, and finished

the performance by a poor third act, making people yawn and gradually dispersing the audience. People remembered who that man had been on whom such posthumous honors were being bestowed, and who was having such a funeral: it was Jean Ramel.

Those three sonorous syllables called up a leonine head, with white hair thrown back in disorder like a mane, with features that looked as if they had been cut out with a bill-hook, but which were so powerful, and in which there flamed such life, as to make one forget their vulgarity and ugliness,—with black eyes under bushy eyebrows, eyes which dilated and flashed like lightning, now veiled as if in tears and then filled with serene mildness,—a voice which now growled so as almost to terrify its hearers, and would have filled the hall of some working-man's club, full of the thick smoke from strong pipes, without being affected by it, and then would be soft, coaxing, persuasive, and unctuous as that of a priest who is holding out promises of Paradise, or giving absolution for our sins.

He had had the good luck to be persecuted, to be in the eyes of the people the incarnation of that lying formula which appears on every public edifice, those three words of the Golden Age, which make those who think, those who suffer, and those who govern, smile somewhat sadly—"Liberty, Fraternity, Equality." Luck had been kind to him, had sustained, had pushed him on by the shoulders, and had set him up on his pedestal again when he had fallen as all idols do.

He spoke and he wrote, and always in order to announce the good news to

all the multitudes who suffered,—no matter to what grade of society they might belong,—to hold out his hand to them and to defend them, to attack the abuses of the "Code,"—that book of injustice and severity,—to speak the truth boldly, even when it lashed his enemies as if it had been a whip.

His books were like Gospels which are read, chapter by chapter, and warmed the most despairing and the most sorrowing hearts, bringing comfort, hope, and dreams to each.

He had lived very modestly until the end, and appeared to spend nothing, and had only kept one old servant, who spoke to him in the Basque dialect.

That chaste philosopher, who had all his life long feared women's snares and wiles, who had looked upon love as a luxury made only for the rich and idle, which unsettles the brain and interferes with acuteness of thought, had allowed himself to be caught like an ordinary man—late in life—when his hair was white and his forehead deeply wrinkled.

It was not, however, as happens in the visions of solitary ascetics, some strange queen or female magician, with stars in her eyes and witchery in her voice, or some loose woman who holds up the symbolical lamp immodestly, to light up her radiant nudity and the pink and white bouquet of her sweet smelling skin, or some woman in search of voluptuous pleasures, whose lascivious appeals it is impossible for any man to listen to without being excited to the very depths of his being. Neither a Princess out of some fairy tale, nor a frail beauty who was expert in reviving the ardor of old men, and of leading them astray, nor a woman disgusted with her ideals,

finding them all alike, who dreams of awakening the heart of one of those men who suffer, who afford so much alleviation to human misery, who seem to be surrounded by a halo, and who never know anything but the true, the beautiful, and the good.

It was only a little girl of twenty, who was as pretty as a wild flower, had a ringing laugh, white teeth, and a mind that was as spotless as a new mirror, in which no figure has been reflected as yet.

He was an exile at the time for having given public expression to what he thought, and was living in an Italian village which was buried in chestnut-trees and situated on the shores of a lake so narrow and so transparent that it might have been taken for some nobleman's fish-pond, an emerald in a large park. It consisted of about twenty red-tiled houses; steep paths paved with flint led up the side of the hills among the vines, where the Madonna, full of grace and goodness, extended her indulgences from shrines which contained dusty, tinsel nosegays.

For the first time in his life Ramel remarked that there were some lips that were more desirable, more smiling than others, that there was hair in which it must be delicious to bury the fingers as in fine silk, and which it must be delightful to kiss, and that there were eyes which contained an infinitude of caresses. He wandered right through the eclogue, which at length revealed true happiness to him, and he had a child, a son, by her.

This was the only secret that Ramel jealously concealed, and of which no more than two or three of his oldest

friends knew aught. While he hesitated about spending twopence on himself, and went to the Institute and to the Chamber of Deputies outside an omnibus, Pepa led the happy life of a millionaire who is not frightened of the to-morrow, and brought up her son like a little prince, with a tutor and three servants, who had nothing to do but to look after him.

All that Ramel made went into his mistress's hands, and when he felt that his last hour was approaching, and that there was no hope of his recovery—in full possession of his faculties and with joy in his dull eyes, he gave his name to Pepa, and made her his lawful widow, in the presence of all his friends. She inherited everything that her former lover left behind, a considerable income from the royalties on his books, and also his pension, which the State continued to pay to her.

Little Ramel throve wonderfully amid all this luxury, and gave free scope to his instincts and his caprices, without his mother ever having the courage to reprove him in the least, and he did not bear the slightest resemblance to Jean Ramel.

Full of pranks, effeminate, a superfine dandy, and precociously vicious, he suggested the idea of those pages at the Court of Florence, whom we meet with in the "Decameron," and who were the playthings for the idle hands of patrician ladies.

He was very ignorant, lived at a great rate, bet on races, and played cards for heavy stakes with seasoned gamblers, old enough to be his father. It was distressing to hear this lad joke about the

memory of him whom he called *the old man*, and persecute his mother because of the worship and adoration which she felt for Jean Ramel, whom she spoke of as if he had become a demigod, when he died, as in the Roman theogony.

He would have liked altogether to have altered the arrangement of that sanctuary, the drawing-room, where Pepa kept some of her husband's manuscripts, the furniture that he had most frequently used, the bed on which he had died, his pens, his clothes, and his weapons. And one evening, not knowing how to dress himself up more originally than the rest for a masked ball that stout Toinette Danicheff was going to give as a housewarming, without saying a word to his mother, he took down the Academician's dress, the sword and cocked hat that had belonged to Jean

Ramel, and put it on as if it had been a disguise on Shrove Tuesday.

Slightly built and with thin arms and legs, the wide clothes hung on him. He was a comical sight with the embroidered skirt of his coat sweeping the carpet, and his sword knocking against his heels. The elbows and the collar were shiny and greasy from wear, for the Master had worn it until it was threadbare, to avoid having to buy another, and had never thought of replacing it.

He made a tremendous hit, and fair Liline Ablette laughed so at his grimaces and his disguise, that that night she threw over Prince Nouredin for him, although he had paid for her house, her horses, and everything else, and allowed her six thousand francs a month for extras and pocket money.

A Rupture

"It is just as I tell you, my dear fellow. Those two poor things whom we all of us envied, who looked like a couple of doves when they are billing and cooing, and were always *spooning*, until they made themselves ridiculous, now hate each other just as much as they used to adore each other. It is a complete break, and one of those which cannot be mended like an old plate! And all for a bit of nonsense, for something so funny that it ought to have brought them closer together and have amused them immensely.

"But how can a man explain himself when he is dying of jealousy and keeps

repeating to his terrified mistress: 'You are lying! you are lying!' When he shakes her, interrupts her while she is speaking, and says such hard things to her that at last she flies into a rage, and thinks of nothing but of giving him *tit for tat* and of paying him out in his own coin, does not care a straw about destroying his happiness, consigns everything to the devil, and talks a lot of bosh which she certainly does not believe—can you blame her? And then, because there is nothing so stupid and so obstinate in the whole world as a lover, neither he nor she will take the first step, and own to having been in

the wrong, and apologize for having gone too far. Both wait and watch and do not even write a few lines about nothing, a subterfuge which would restore peace. No, they let day succeed day, and there are feverish and sleepless nights when the bed seems so hard, so cheerless, and so large, and habits get weakened and the fire of love that was still smoldering at the bottom of each heart dies in smoke. By degrees both find some reason for what they wish to do, think themselves idiots to lose the time which will never return, in that fashion, and so *good-bye*, and there you are! That is how Josine Cadenette and that great idiot Servance separated."

Lalie Spring had lighted a cigarette, and the blue smoke played about her fine, fair hair, making one think of those last rays of the setting sun which pierce through the clouds at sunset. Resting her elbows on his knees, and with her chin in her hand in a dreamy attitude, she murmured:

"Sad, isn't it?"

"Bah!" I replied, "at their age people easily console themselves, and everything begins over again, even love!"

"Well, Josine has already found somebody else—"

"And did she tell you her story?"

"Of course she did, and it is such a joke! You know that Servance is one of those fellows you would wish to have when you have time to amuse yourself, so self-possessed that he would be capable of ruining all the older ones in a girls' school, and given to trifling as much as most men, so that Josine calls him 'perpetual motion.' He would have liked to prolong his fun until the Day of Judgment, and seemed to fancy that

beds were not made to sleep in at all. But she could not get used to being deprived of nearly all her rest, and it really made her ill. But as she wished to be as conciliatory as possible, to love and to be loved as ardently as in the past, and also to sleep off the effects of her happiness peacefully, she rented a small room in a distant quarter, in a quiet shady street, giving out that she had just come from the country, and put hardly any furniture into it except a good bed and a dressing-table.

"Then she invented an old aunt, who was ill and always grumbling, who suffered from heart disease and lived in one of the suburbs, and so, several times a week, Josine took refuge in her sleeping place, and used to sleep late there as if it had been some delicious abode, where one forgets the whole world. Once they forgot to call her at the proper time; she got back late, tired, with red and swollen eyelids, involved herself in lies, contradicted herself, and looked so much as if she had just come from the confessional, feeling horribly ashamed of herself, or, as if she had hurried home from some assignation, that Servance worried himself about it, thought that he was being made a fool of, as so many of his comrades were, got into a rage and made up his mind to set the matter straight, and to discover who this aunt was who had so suddenly fallen from the skies.

"He applied to an obliging agency, where they excited his jealousy, exasperated him day after day by making him believe that Josine Cadenette was making an absolute fool of him, had no more a sick aunt than she had any virtue, but that during the day she con-

tinued the little debaucheries which she committed with him at night, and that she shamelessly frequented some discreet bachelor's lodgings, where probably more than one of his best friends was amusing himself at his expense, and having his share of the cake.

"He was fool enough to believe these fellows, in stead of going and watching Josine himself, putting his nose into the business, and finding and knocking at the door of her room. He wanted to hear no more, and would not listen to her. For a trifle, in spite of her tears, he would have turned the poor thing into the streets, as if she had been a bundle of dirty linen. You may guess how she flew out at him and told him all sorts of things to annoy him; she let him believe he was not mistaken, that she had had enough of his affection, and that she was madly in love

with another man. He grew very pale when she said that, looked at her furiously, clenched his teeth, and said in a hoarse voice:

"Tell me his name, tell me his name!"

"Oh!" she said, chaffingly, 'you know him very well!' and if I had not happened to have gone in I think there would have been a tragedy. How stupid they are: they were so happy and loved each other so. And now Josine is living with fat Schweinssohn, a low scoundrel who will live upon her, and Servance has taken up with Sophie Labisque, who might easily be his mother. You know her, that bundle of red and yellow, who has been at that kind of thing for eighteen years, and whom Laglandée has christened '*Saecula saeculorum!*' "

"By Jove! I should rather think I did!"

Margot's Tapers

I.

ON the evening of Midsummer day, Margot Fresquyl had allowed herself to taste for the first time the delicious intoxication of the mortal sin of loving.

While most of the young people were holding one another's hands and dancing in a circle round the burning logs, the girl had shyly taken the deserted road which lead to the wood, leaning on the arm of her partner, a tall, vigorous farm-servant, whose Christian name was Tiennou, which, by the way, was the only name he had borne from his birth.

For he was entered on the register of births with this curt note, "Father and mother unknown," having been found on St. Stephen's Day under a shed on a farm, where some poor, despairing wretch had abandoned him, perhaps even without turning her head to look at him.

For months Tiennou had madly worshiped the pretty blond girl, who was now trembling as he clasped in his arms, under the sweet coolness of the leaves. He well remembered how she had dazzled him—like some ecstatic and ineffaceable vision,—the first time that he saw her in her father's mill, where he

had gone to ask for work. She stood out all rosy from the warmth of the day, amid the impalpable clouds of flour, which diffused a misty whiteness through the air. With her hair hanging about her in untidy curls, as if she had just awakened from a profound sleep, she stretched herself lazily, her bare arms clasped behind her head, yawning so as to show her white teeth, which glistened like those of a young wolf, and from beneath her unbuttoned bodice her maiden bosom appeared with innocent immodesty. He told her that he thought her adorable, so stupidly that she made fun of him and scourged him with her cruel laughter. From that day, he spent his life in Margot's shadow. He might have been taken for one of those wild beasts ardent with desire, which ceaselessly utter maddened cries to the stars on nights when the constellations bathe the dark coverts in warm light. Margot met him wherever she went, and seized with pity, and by degrees attracted by his ardor, by his dumb entreaties, by the burning looks which flashed from his large eyes, she had returned his love. She had dreamed restlessly that during a whole night she had been in his vigorous arms, which pressed her like corn that is being crushed in the mill; that she was obeying a man who had subdued her, and was learning strange things which other girls talked about in a low voice when drawing water at the well.

She had, however, been obliged to wait until Midsummer day, for the miller watched over his heiress very carefully.

The two lovers told each other all this as they were going along the dark road, innocently giving utterance to words of happiness which rose to their lips like

the refrain of a forgotten song. At times they were silent, not knowing what more to say and not daring to embrace each other any more. The night was soft and warm, the warmth of a half-closed alcove in a bedroom, and had the effect of a tumbler of new wine.

The leaves were sleeping motionless and in supreme peace, and in the distance they could hear the monotonous trill of the brooks as they flowed over the stones. Amid the faint noise of the insects, the nightingales were answering each other from tree to tree. Everything seemed alive with hidden life, the sky was bright, and the falling stars might have been taken for white forms wandering among the dark trunks of the trees.

"Why have we come?" Margot asked, in a panting voice. "Do you not want me any more, Tiennou?"

"Alas! I dare not," he replied. "Listen: you know that I was picked up on the highroad, that I have nothing in the world except my two arms, and that miller Fresquyl will never let his daughter marry a poor devil like me."

She interrupted him with a painful gesture, and putting her lips to his, she said:

"What does that matter? I love you, and I want you. Take me."

And thus it was, on St. John's eve, that Margot Fresquyl for the first time yielded to the mortal sin of love.

II.

Did the miller guess his daughter's secret when he heard her singing merrily from dawn till dusk and saw her sitting dreaming at her window instead of sew-

ing as she was in the habit of doing?

Did he see it when she threw ardent kisses from the tips of her fingers to her lover at a distance?

Whether he did or not, he shut up poor Margot in the mill as if it had been a prison. No more love or pleasure, no more meetings at night on the verge of the wood. When she chatted with the passers-by, or tried furtively to open the gate of the inclosure to make her escape, her father beat her as if she had been some disobedient animal, beat her until she would fall on her knees, on the floor with clasped hands, scarcely able to move, her whole body covered with purple bruises.

She pretended to obey him, but she revolted in her whole being, and the string of bitter insults which he heaped upon her rang in her head. With clenched hands, and a gesture of terrible hatred, she cursed him for standing in the way of her love. At night, she rolled about on her bed, bit the sheets, moaned, stretched herself out for imaginary embraces, maddened by the longing with which her body was still palpitating. She called out Tiennou's name aloud, she broke the peaceful stillness of the sleeping house with her heartrending sobs, and her weeping drowned the monotonous sound of the water dripping under the arch of the mill, between the immovable paddles of the wheel.

III.

Then came that terrible week in October when the unfortunate young fellows who had drawn bad numbers had to join their regiments.* Tiennou was one of them. Margot was desperate at

the thought of not seeing him for five interminable years, and grieving that they could not even, at that hour of sad farewell, be alone and exchange those consoling words which afterward soften the pang of absence.

Tiennou prowled about the house, like a starving beggar, and one morning, while the miller was mending the wheel, he managed to see Margot.

"I will wait for you in the old place to-night," he whispered, in terrible grief. "I know it is the last time. I shall throw myself into some deep hole in the river if you do not come!"

"I will be there, Tiennou," she replied, in a bewildered manner. "I swear I will be there, even if I have to do something terrible to enable me to come!"

* * * * *

The village was on fire, illumining the dark night, and the flames, fanned by the wind, rose up like evil torches. The thatched roofs, the ricks of corn, the haystacks, and the barns fell in and crackled like rockets, while the sky looked as if it was illuminated by an aurora borealis. Fresquyl's mill was smoking, and its calcined ruins were reflected on the deep water. The sheep and cows were running about the fields in terror, the dogs were howling, and the women were sitting on the broken furniture, crying and wringing their hands. At this time Margot was abandoning herself to her lover's ardent

*Written before universal service was obligatory, and when soldiers were selected by conscription, a certain proportion of those who drew high numbers being exempt from service.

caresses, and with her arms round his neck she said to him, tenderly:

"You see that I have kept my promise. I set fire to the mill so that I might be able to get out. So much the worse if all have suffered. But I do not care as long as you love me, are happy with me!"

And pointing to the fire, which was

still burning fiercely in the distance, she added with a burst of savage laughter:

"Tiennou, we shall not have such beautiful tapers at our wedding Mass when you come back from your regiment!"

And thus it was that for the second time Margot Fresquyl yielded to the mortal sin of love.

The Accent

IT WAS a large sheltered house, with long white terraces shaded by vines, from which one could see the sea. Large pines stretched a dark arch over the ruined *façade*, and there was a look of neglect, of want, and wretchedness about the place, such as irreparable losses, departure to other countries, and death leave behind them.

The interior wore a strange look, with half unpacked trunks serving for wardrobes, with piles of handboxes, and for seats an array of worm-eaten armchairs, into which bits of velvet and silk, cut from old dresses, had been patched at random. Along the walls there were rows of rusty nails which made one think of old portraits and of pictures full of family history, which had one by one been sold for a song to some second-hand furniture broker.

The rooms were in disorder and furnished at random, while velvets hanging from the ceilings and in the corners seemed to show that as the servants were no longer paid except by promises, they no longer did more than occasionally give them an accidental, care-

less touch with the duster. The drawing-room, which was extremely large, was full of useless knickknacks, the sort of rubbish which is put up for sale at stalls at watering-places, daubs—they could not be called paintings—of portraits and of flowers, and an old piano with yellow keys,

Such is the home where she who had been called the handsome Madame de Maurillac was spending her monotonous existence, like some unfortunate doll which inconstant, childish hands have thrown into a corner in a loft—she who had almost passed for a professional seductress, and whose coquetries, at least so the faithful ones of the Party said, had been able to excite a passing and last spark of desire in the dull eyes of the Emperor.

Like many others, she and her husband had waited for his return from Elba, had discounted a fresh, immediate chance, had kept up boldly and spent the remains of fortune in the game of luxury.

On the day when the illusion vanished, and he was forced to awake from his

dream, Monsieur de Maurillac, without considering that he was leaving his wife and daughter behind him almost penniless, and not strong enough morally to make up his mind to come down in the world, to vegetate, to fight creditors, to accept some sinecure, poisoned himself, like a shopgirl forsaken by her lover.

Madame de Maurillac did not mourn for him. As this lamentable event had made her interesting, and as she was assisted and supported by unexpected acts of kindness, and had a good adviser in one of those old Parisian lawyers who can extricate you out of the worst difficulties, she managed to save something from the wreck, and to keep a small income. Then reassured and emboldened, and resting her ultimate illusions and her frail hopes on her daughter's radiant beauty, she prepared for that last game in which they would risk everything, and hoping also that she might herself marry again, the ancient flirt arranged a double existence.

For months and months she would disappear from the world, and, as a pretext for her isolation and for hiding herself in the country, alleged her daughter's delicate health, and the important interests she had to look after in the South of France.

Her frivolous friends looked upon this as a great act of heroism, as something almost superhuman, and so courageous, that they tried to distract her by their incessant letters, and religiously informed her of all the scandals and love adventures that came to light in the suburbs as well as in the apotheosis of the capital.

The difficult struggle which Madame de Maurillac had to keep up in order

to maintain her rank was really as fine as any campaign in the twilight of defeat, a slow retreat where men only give way inch by inch, fighting until the last cartridge is expended or fresh troops arrive, to bar the way to the enemy, and save the threatened flag.

Broken in by the same discipline, and haunted by the same dream, mother and daughter lived on almost nothing in the dull, dilapidated house which the peasants called the château, and economized like poor people who only have a few hundred francs a year to live on. But Fabienne de Maurillac developed well in spite of everything, and grew up into a woman—like some rare flower preserved from all contact with the outer air and reared in a hothouse.

In order that she might not lose her Parisian accent by speaking too much with the servants, who had remained peasants though in livery, Madame de Maurillac, who had not been able to bring a lady's maid with her, on account of the extra cost which traveling expenses and wages would have entailed, and who, moreover, was afraid that some indiscretion might betray her maneuver and cover her with ridicule, made up her mind to wait on her daughter herself. And Fabienne talked with nobody but her, saw nobody but her, and was like a little novice in a convent. Nobody was allowed to speak to her, or to interfere with her walks in the large garden, or on the white terraces that were reflected in the blue water.

As soon, however, as the season for the country and the seaside came, they packed up their trunks, and locked the doors of their house of exile. As they were not known, and took those terrible

trains which stop at every station, by which you arrive at your destination in the middle of the night, with the certainty that nobody will be waiting for you and see you get out of the carriage, they traveled third class, so that they might have a few bank notes the more with which to make a show.

A fortnight in Paris in the family house at Auteuil, a fortnight in which to try on dresses and bonnets and to show themselves, and then Trouville, Aix, or Biarritz, the whole show complete, with parties succeeding parties, money spent as if they did not know its value, balls at the Casinos, constant flirtations, compromising intimacies with that kind of admirers who immediately surround two pretty women, one in the radiant beauty of her eighteen years, and the other in the brightness of that maturity which the beautiful September days bring with them.

Unfortunately, however, they had to do the same thing over again every year, and as if bad luck were continuing to follow them implacably, Madame de Maurillac and her daughter did not succeed in their endeavors, did not manage during the usual absence from home to make some eligible bachelor fall in love immediately, and ask for Fabienne's hand. Consequently, they were very unhappy. Their energies flagged, and their courage left them, like water that escapes, drop by drop, through a crack in a jug. They grew low-spirited, and no longer dared to be open toward each other and to exchange confidences and projects.

Fabienne, with her pale cheeks, her large eyes with blue circles round them,

and her closed lips, looked like a captive princess tormented by constant *ennui*, who is troubled by evil suggestions, and dreams of flight and of escape from the prison where Fate holds her captive.

One night, when the sky was covered with heavy thunderclouds and the heat was most oppressive, Madame de Maurillac called to her daughter, whose room was next to hers. After calling her loudly for some time in vain, she sprang out of bed in fright and almost broke open the door with her trembling hands. The room was empty, and the pillows untouched.

Then, half mad and foreseeing some irreparable misfortune, the poor woman ran all over the large house, and rushed out into the garden, where the air was heavy with the scent of flowers. She acted like some wild animal that is pursued by a pack of hounds, trying to penetrate the darkness with her anxious looks, and gasping as if some one were holding her by the throat. Suddenly she staggered, uttered a painful cry, and fell down in a fit.

There, before her in the shadow of the myrtle-trees, Fabienne was sitting on the knees of a man—of the gardener—with both her arms round his neck, kissing him ardently. As if to defy her, and to show her how vain all her precautions and her vigilance had been, the girl was telling her lover, *in the country dialect*, and in a cooing and delightful voice, how she adored him and belonged to him.

Madame de Maurillac is in a lunatic asylum, and Fabienne has married the gardener.

Could she have done better?

Profitable Business

HE CERTAINLY did not think himself a saint, nor did he put forth any hypocritical pretensions to virtue. Nevertheless, he thought as highly of himself as he did of anybody else, perhaps, even a trifle more highly. And that, quite impartially, without any more self-love than was necessary, and without having to accuse himself of being self-conceited. He did himself justice, that was all. He had good moral principles, and applied them, if the truth must be told, not only to judging the conduct of others, but also to the regulation of his own conduct, as he would have been very vexed if he had not been able to think of himself:

“On the whole, I am what people call a perfectly honorable man.”

Luckily, he had never (oh! never) been obliged to doubt the excellent opinion he had of himself, an opinion which he liked to express thus, in moments of rhetorical expansion:

“My whole life gives me the right to shake hands with myself.”

A subtle psychologist would perhaps have found some flaws in his mailed self-righteousness, sanctimoniously satisfied with itself. For example, it was quite certain that our friend had no scruples in making profit out of the vices or misfortunes of his neighbors, provided that he was not, in his own opinion, the person who was solely or chiefly responsible for them. But on the whole this was only one way of looking at it, and there was plenty of material for casuistic argument on the point. This sort of discussion is particularly unpleasant to such simple natures as this worthy fellow's. He would

probably have said to the psychologist:

“Why go on a wild-goose chase? You can see that I am perfectly sincere.”

Do not believe, however, that this perfect sincerity prevented him from having elevated views. He prided himself on having a weakness for imagination and the unforeseen, and though he would have been offended at being called a dishonorable man, he would, perhaps, have been still more hurt of anybody had accused him of middle-class tastes.

As to affairs of the heart he expressed a most virtuous horror of adultery, for if guilty of that he would not have been able to bear that testimony to himself, which was so sweet to his conscience:

“Ah! I rejoice to say that I never wronged anybody!”

On the other hand, he was not satisfied with pleasures which are paid for by the hour, and which debase *the noblest desires of the heart* to the vulgar satisfaction of a physical requirement. What he required, he used to say, while lifting his eyes up to heaven, was:

“I crave for something more ideal than that!”

The search after the ideal did not, indeed, cost him any great effort. It was limited to shunning licensed houses of ill-fame, and to avoiding street-walkers.

It consisted chiefly in trying to be gallant with women, in trying to persuade himself that they liked him for his own sake, and in preferring those whose manner, dress, and looks allowed room for suppositions and romantic illusions, such as:

“She might be taken for a little work-girl, who is still virtuous.” “No, I

rather think she is a widow, who has met with misfortune." "What if she be a fashionable lady in disguise!" And other silly sayings, which he knew were nonsense, when he uttered them, but the imaginary flavor of which was very pleasant to him all the same.

With such tastes, it was only natural that this epicure should follow and jostle women in the large shops, and wherever there was a crowd, and that he should especially look out for ladies of easy virtue, for nothing is more exciting than half-closed shutters, behind which a face is indistinctly seen, and from which one hears a furtive call.

He would say to himself: "Who is she? Is she young and pretty? Is she some old woman, who is skillful at her business, but who does not venture to show herself any longer? Or is she some beginner, who has not yet acquired the boldness of an old hand? In any case, it is the unknown; perhaps, my ideal—at least during the time it takes me to find my way upstairs." And as he went up, his heart always beat as it does at a first meeting with a woman beloved.

But he had never felt such a delicious shiver as he did on the day on which he penetrated into that old house in the blind alley in Ménilmontant. He did not know why, for he had often gone after so-called love in much stranger places; but now, without any reason, he had the presentiment that he was about to meet with an adventure, and that gave him a delightful sensation.

The woman who had beckoned to him lived on the third floor. All the way upstairs his excitement increased, and his heart was beating violently when he

reached the landing. As he was going up, he smelled a peculiar odor, which grew stronger and stronger, and though he tried to analyze it, all he could decide was that it smelled like a chemist's shop.

The door on the right, at the end of the passage, was opened as soon as he put his foot on the landing, and the woman said, in a low voice:

"Come in, my dear."

A very strong smell met his nostrils through the open door, and he exclaimed:

"How stupid I was! I know what it is now; carbolic acid, is it not?"

"Yes," the woman replied. "Don't you like it, my dear? It is very wholesome, you know."

The woman was not ugly, although not young; she had very good eyes, although these were sad and sunken in her head. Evidently she had been crying very much quite recently, and that imparted a special spice to the vague smile she put on, so as to appear more amiable.

Seized by his romantic ideas, and under the influence of the presentiment which he had had just before, he thought—and the idea filled him with pleasure—

"She is some widow, whom poverty has forced to sell herself."

The room was small, but very clean and tidy, which confirmed him in his conjecture, and as he was curious to verify it, he went into the three rooms, which opened into one another. The bedroom came first; next came a sort of drawing-room, and then a dining-room which evidently served as a kitchen, for a Dutch tiled stove stood in the middle of it, on which a stew was sim-

mering. The smell of carbolic acid was even stronger in that room. He remarked it, and added with a laugh:

"Do you put it in your soup?"

And as he said this, he grasped the handle of the door which led into the next room, for he wanted to see everything, even that nook, which was apparently a store cupboard. But the woman seized him by the arm, and pulled him violently back.

"No, no," she said, almost in a whisper, and in a hoarse and suppliant voice; "no, dear, not there, not there, you must not go in there."

"Why?" said he, for his wish to go in was now stronger.

"Because if you go in there, you will have no inclination to remain with me, and I want you to stay. If you only knew!"

"Well, what?" And with a violent movement he opened the glazed door. The smell of carbolic acid seemed almost to strike him in the face, and what he saw made him recoil still more, for on a small iron bedstead lay the dead body of a woman fantastically illumined by a single wax candle. In horror he turned to escape.

"Stop, my dear," the woman sobbed; and clinging to him she told him amid a flood of tears that her friend had died two days previously, and that there was no money to bury her. Said she, "You can understand that I want it to be a respectable funeral, we were so very fond of each other! Stop here,

my dear, do stop. I only want ten francs more. Don't go away."

They had gone back into the bedroom, and she was trying to detain him:

"No," he said, "let me go. I will give you the ten francs, but I will not stay here; I cannot."

He took his purse out of his pocket, extracted a ten-franc piece, put it on the table, and then went to the door. When he had reached it, a thought suddenly struck him, as if somebody were reasoning with him, without his knowledge.

"Why lose these ten francs? Why not profit by this woman's good intentions. She certainly behaved pluckily, and if I had not known about the matter, I should certainly not have gone away for some time. Well then?"

Then other and obscurer suggestions whispered to him:

"She was her friend! They were so fond of each other! Was it friendship or love? Oh! love apparently. Well, it would really be avenging morality, if this woman were forced to be faithless to that monstrous love." Then he turned round to her and said in a low and trembling voice: "Look here! If I give you twenty francs instead of ten, I suppose you could buy some flowers for her, as well?"

The unhappy woman's face brightened with pleasure and gratitude.

"Will you really give me twenty?"

"Yes," he replied, "and more perhaps. It quite depends upon yourself."

Bertha

MY OLD friend—one has friends occasionally who are much older than oneself—my old friend Doctor Bonnet had often invited me to spend some time with him at Riom, and as I did not know Auvergne, I made up my mind to go there in the summer of 1876.

I got there by the morning train, and the first person I saw on the platform was the doctor. He was dressed in a gray suit, and wore a soft, black, wide-brimmed, high-crowned felt hat, which was narrow at the top like a chimney pot, a hat which hardly anyone except an Auvergnant would wear, and which smacked of the charcoal-burner. Dressed like that, the doctor had the appearance of an old young man, with a spare body under a thin coat, and a large head covered with white hair.

He embraced me with the evident pleasure which country people feel when they meet long expected friends, and stretching out his arm said proudly: "This is Auvergne!"

I saw nothing before me, except a range of mountains, whose summits, which resembled truncated cones, must have been extinct volcanoes.

Then, pointing to the name of the station, he said:

"*Riom*, the fatherland of magistrates, the pride of the magistracy, ought rather to be the fatherland of doctors."

"Why?" I asked.

"Why?" he replied with a laugh. "If you transpose the letters, you have the Latin word *mori*, to die. That is the reason why I settled here, my young friend."

And delighted at his own joke, he carried me off, rubbing his hands.

As soon as I had swallowed a cup of coffee, he made me go and see the town. I admired the chemist's house, and the other celebrated houses, which were all black, but as pretty as knickknacks, with their *façades* of sculptured stone. I admired the statue of the Virgin, the patroness of butchers, and he told me an amusing story about this, which I will relate some other time. Then Doctor Bonnet said to me:

"I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes while I go and see a patient, and then I will take you to Chatel-Guyon, so as to show you the general aspect of the town, and all the mountain chain of the Puy-de-Dôme, before lunch. You can wait for me outside; I shall only go upstairs and come down immediately."

He left me outside one of those old, gloomy, silent, melancholy houses which one sees in the provinces. This one appeared to look particularly sinister, and I soon discovered the reason. All the large windows on the first floor were half boarded up with wooden shutters. The upper part of them alone could be opened, as if one had wished to prevent the people who were locked up in that huge stone trunk from looking into the street.

When the doctor came down again, I told him how it had struck me, and he replied:

"You are quite right; the poor creature who is living there must never see what is going on outside. She is a madwoman, or rather an idiot, what you Normans would call a *Niente*.* It is

*A *Nothing*, i. e., an idiot.

a miserable story, but a very singular pathological case at the same time. Shall I tell you of it?"

I begged him to do so, and he continued:

"Twenty years ago, the owners of this house, who were my patients, had a daughter who was seemingly like all other girls. But I soon discovered that while her body became admirably developed, her intellect remained stationary.

"She began to walk very early, but could not talk. At first I thought she was deaf, but discovered that although she heard perfectly, she did not understand anything that was said to her. Violent noises made her start and frightened her, without her understanding how they were caused.

"She grew up into a superb woman, but she was dumb, from an absolute want of intellect. I tried all means to introduce a gleam of sense into her head, but nothing succeeded. I thought that I noticed that she knew her nurse, though as soon as she was weaned, she failed to recognize her mother. She could never pronounce that word, which is the first that children utter, and the last which men murmur when dying on the field of battle. She sometimes tried to talk, but produced nothing but incoherent sounds.

"When the weather was fine, she laughed continually, emitting low cries which might be compared to the twittering of birds. When it rained she cried and moaned in a mournful, terrifying manner, like the howling of a dog when death occurs in a house.

"She was fond of rolling on the grass, like young animals do, and of running

about madly. She used to clap her hands every morning when the sun shone into her room, and would jump out of bed and insist, by signs, on being dressed as quickly as possible, so that she might get out.

"She did not appear to distinguish between people, between her mother and her nurse, or between her father and me, or between the coachman and the cook. I liked her parents, who were very unhappy on her account, very much, and went to see them nearly every day. I dined with them tolerably frequently, which enabled me to remark that Bertha (they had called her Bertha) seemed to recognize the various dishes, and to prefer some to others. At that time she was twelve years old, but as fully formed in figure as a girl of eighteen, and taller than I was. Then, the idea struck me of developing her greediness, and by such means to try and produce some slight power of discernment into her mind—to force her, by the diversity of flavors, if not by reason, to arrive at instinctive distinctions, which would of themselves constitute a species of analysis akin to thought. Later on, by appealing to her senses, and by carefully making use of those which could serve us, we might hope to obtain a kind of reaction on her intellect, and by degrees increase the involuntary action of her brain.

"One day I put two plates before her, one of soup, and the other of very sweet vanilla cream. I made her taste each of them successively, then I let her choose for herself, and she ate the plate of cream. In a short time I made her very greedy, so greedy that it appeared as if the only idea she had in her head

was the desire for eating. She recognized the various dishes perfectly, stretched out her hands toward those that she liked, and took hold of them eagerly, crying when they were taken from her. Then I thought I would try and teach her to come to the dining-room, when the dinner bell rang. It took a long time, but I succeeded in the end. In her vacant intellect, there was a fixed correlation between the sound and her taste, a correspondence between two senses, an appeal from one to the other, and consequently a sort of connection of ideas,—if one can term an instinctive hyphen between two organic functions an idea,—and so I carried my experiments further, and taught her, with much difficulty, to recognize meal-times on the face of the clock.

“It was impossible for me for a long time to attract her attention to the hands, but I succeeded in making her remark the clockwork and the striking apparatus. The means I employed were very simple. I asked them not to have the bell rung for lunch, but that everybody should get up and go into the dining-room when the little brass hammer struck twelve o’clock; but I found great difficulty in making her learn to count the strokes. She ran to the door each time she heard the clock strike, but by degrees she learned that all the strokes had not the same value as regarded meals, and she frequently fixed her eyes, guided by her ears, on the dial of the clock.

“When I noticed that, I took care, every day at twelve and at six o’clock, to place my fingers on the figures twelve and six, as soon as the moment she was

waiting for, had arrived. I soon noticed that she attentively followed the motion of the small brass hands, which I had often turned in her presence.

“She had understood! Perhaps I should rather say that she had seized the idea. I had succeeded in getting the knowledge, or rather the sensation of the time into her, just as is the case with carp, who certainly have no clocks, but know that they are fed every day at a certain time.

“When once I had obtained that result, all the clocks and watches in the house occupied her attention almost exclusively. She spent her time in looking at them, in listening to them, and in waiting for meal-times, and once something very funny happened. The striking apparatus of a pretty little Louis XVI. clock that hung at the head of her bed had got out of order, and she noticed it. She sat for twenty minutes, with her eyes on the hands, waiting for it to strike ten, but when the hand passed the figure, she was astonished at not hearing anything. So stupefied was she, indeed, that she sat down, no doubt overwhelmed by a feeling of violent emotion, such as attacks us in the face of some terrible catastrophe. She had the wonderful patience to wait until eleven o’clock, in order to see what would happen, but, as she naturally heard nothing, she was suddenly either seized with a wild fit of rage at having been deceived and imposed upon by appearances, or else was overcome by the fear which a frightened creature feels at some terrible mystery, or by the furious impatience of a passionate individual who meets with some obstacle. She took up the tongs from the fireplace,

and struck the clock so violently that she broke it to pieces in a moment.

"It was evident, therefore, that her brain did act and calculate, obscurely it is true, and within very restricted limits, for I could never succeed in making her distinguish persons as she distinguished the time. To stir her intellect, it was necessary to appeal to her passions, in the material sense of the word, and we soon had another, and alas! a very terrible proof of this!

* * * * *

"She had grown up into a splendid girl; a perfect type of a race, a sort of lovely and stupid Venus. She was sixteen, and I have rarely seen such perfection of form, such suppleness, and such regular features. I said she was a Venus; yes, a fair, stout, vigorous Venus, with large, bright, vacant eyes, blue as the flowers of the flax plant. She had a large mouth with full lips, the mouth of a glutton, of a sensualist, a mouth made for kisses. Well, one morning her father came into my consulting-room; with a strange look on his face, and sitting down, without even replying to my greeting, he said:

" 'I want to speak to you about a very serious matter. Would it be possible—would it be possible for Bertha to marry?'

" 'Bertha to marry! Why, it is quite impossible!'

" 'Yes, I know, I know,' he replied. 'But reflect, doctor—don't you think—perhaps—we hoped—if she had children—it would be a great shock to her, but a great happiness, and who knows whether maternity might not rouse her intellect?'

"I was in a state of great perplexity.

He was right, and it was possible that such a new situation, and that wonderful instinct of maternity which beats in the hearts of the lower animals as it does in the heart of a woman, which makes a hen fly at a dog's jaws to defend her chickens, might bring about a revolution, an utter change in her vacant mind, and set the motionless mechanism of her thoughts into movement. And then, moreover, I immediately remembered a personal instance. Some years previously I had possessed a spaniel bitch which was so stupid that I could do nothing with her, but when she had had pups she became, if not exactly clever, yet as intelligent as many other dogs who have not been thoroughly broken.

"As soon as I foresaw the possibility of this, the wish to get Bertha married grew on me, not so much out of friendship for her and her poor parents, as from scientific curiosity. What would happen? It was a singular problem, and I said to her father:

" 'Perhaps you are right. You might make the attempt—but—but you will never find a man to consent to marry her.'

" 'I have found somebody,' he said in a low voice.

"I was dumfounded, and said: 'Somebody really suitable? Some one of your own rank and position in society?'

" 'Decidedly,' he replied.

" 'Oh! And may I ask his name?'

" 'I came on purpose to tell you and to consult you. It is Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles.'

"I felt inclined to exclaim: 'What a wretch,' but I held my tongue, and after

a few moments' silence, I said:

"'Oh! Very good. I see nothing against it.'

"The poor man shook me heartily by the hand, and said:

"'She is to be married next month.'

* * * * *

"Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles was a scapegrace of good family, who, after having spent all that he had inherited from his father, and having incurred debts by all kinds of doubtful means, had been trying to discover some other way of obtaining money. Hence this method. He was a good-looking young fellow, and in capital health, but fast—one of that odious tribe of provincial fast men—and appeared to me to be the sort of a husband who could be got rid of later, by making him an allowance. He came to the house to pay his addresses, and to strut about before the idiot girl, who, however, seemed to please him. He brought her flowers, kissed her hands, sat at her feet, and looked at her with affectionate eyes; but she took no notice of any of his attentions, and made no distinction between him and the other persons about her.

"However, the marriage took place, and you may guess how excited my curiosity was. I went to see Bertha the next day, to try and discover from her looks whether any feeling had been roused in her, but I found her just the same as she was every day, wholly taken up with the clock and dinner, while he, on the contrary, appeared really in love, and tried to rouse his wife's spirits and affection by little endearments and such caresses as one bestows on a kitten. He could think of nothing better.

"I called upon the married couple pretty frequently, and I soon perceived that the young woman knew her husband, and gave him those eager looks which she had hitherto only bestowed on sweet dishes.

"She followed his movements, knew his step on the stairs or in the neighboring rooms and clapped her hands when he came in. Her face was changed and brightened by the flames of profound happiness and of desire. She loved him with her whole body and with all her being, to the very depths of her poor, weak soul, and with all her heart, the poor heart of some grateful animal. It was really a delightful and innocent picture of simple passion, of carnal yet modest passion, such as nature planted in mankind, before man complicated and disfigured it by all the various shades of sentiment. But he soon grew tired of this ardent, beautiful, dumb creature, and did not spend more than an hour a day with her, thinking it sufficient to devote his nights to her, and she began to suffer in consequence. She used to wait for him from morning till night, with her eyes on the clock. She did not even look after the meals now, for he took all his away from home, Clermont Chatel-Guyon, Royat, no matter where, as long as he was not obliged to come home.

"She began to grow thin; every other thought every other wish, every other expectation, and every other confused hope disappeared from her mind, and the hours during which she did not see him became hours of terrible suffering to her. Soon he used frequently not to come home at night; he spent them with women at the Casino at Royat, and did

not come home until daybreak. But she never went to bed before he returned. She would remain sitting motionless in an easy-chair, with her eyes fixed on the clock, which turned so slowly and regularly round the china face on which the hours were painted.

"When she heard the trot of his horse in the distance, she would sit up with a start. When he came into the room, she would get up with the movements of a phantom, and point to the clock, as if to say to him: 'Look how late it is!'

"He began to be afraid of this amorous and jealous, half-witted woman, and flew into a rage, like brutes do; and one night he even went so far as to strike her, so they sent for me. When I arrived she was writhing and screaming in a terrible crisis of pain, anger, passion, how do I know what? Can anyone tell what goes on in such undeveloped brains?

"I calmed her by subcutaneous injections of morphine, and forbade her to see that man again, for I saw clearly that marriage would infallibly kill her, by degrees.

* * * * *

"Then she went mad! Yes, my dear friend, that idiot has gone mad. She is always thinking of him and waiting for him; she waits for him all day and night, awake or asleep, at this very moment, ceaselessly. When I saw her getting thinner and thinner, never taking her eyes off the clocks, I had them removed from the house. I thus make it impossible for her to count the hours, or to remember, from her indistinct reminiscences, at what time he used to come home. I hope to destroy the recollection of it in time, and to extinguish

that ray of thought which I had kindled with so much difficulty.

"The other day I tried an experiment. I offered her my watch. She took it and looked at it for some time; then she began to scream terribly, as if the sight of that little object had suddenly aroused her recollection, which was beginning to grow indistinct. She is pitifully thin now, with hollow and brilliant eyes, and she walks up and down ceaselessly, like a wild beast does in its cage. I have had bars put to the windows, and have had the seats fixed to the floor, so as to prevent her from looking to see whether he is coming.

"Oh! her poor parents! What a life they must lead!"

We had got to the top of the hill, and the doctor turned round and said to me:

"Look at Riom from here."

The gloomy town looked like some ancient city. Behind it, a green, wooded plain studded with towns and villages, and bathed in a soft blue haze, extended until it was lost in the distance. Far away on my right, there was a range of lofty mountains with round summits, or truncated cones, and the doctor began to enumerate the villages, towns, and hills and to give me the history of all of them. But I did not listen to him; I was thinking of nothing but the mad woman, and only saw her. She seemed to be hovering over that vast extent of country like a mournful ghost, and I asked him abruptly:

"What has become of the husband?"

My friend seemed rather surprised, but after a few moments' hesitation, he replied:

"He is living at Royat, on an allowance that they make him, and is quite happy; he leads a very fast life."

As we were going slowly back, both of us silent and rather low-spirited, an English dogcart, drawn by a thoroughbred horse, came up behind us and

passed us rapidly. The doctor took me by the arm:

"There he is," he said.

I saw nothing except a gray felt hat, cocked over one ear, above a pair of broad shoulders, driving off in a cloud of dust.

The Last Step

MONSIEUR DE SAINT-JUÉRY would not have deceived his old mistress for anything in the world. Perhaps it was from an instinctive fear, for he had heard of adventures that turn out badly, make a scandal, and bring about hateful family quarrels, crises from which one emerges enervated and exasperated with destiny, and, as it were, with the weight of a cannon-ball on one's feet. Perhaps also from his need for a calm, sheep-like existence, undisturbed by any shock; perhaps from the remnants of the love which had made him, during the first years of their connection, the slave of the proud dominating beauty, and of her enthralling charms.

He kept out of the way of temptation almost timidly, was faithful to her, and was as submissive as a spaniel. He paid her every attention, did not appear to notice that the outlines of her figure, which had formerly been so harmonious and supple, were getting too full and puffy, that her face, which used to remind him of a blush rose, was getting wrinkled, and that her eyes were getting dull. He admired her in spite of everything, almost blindly, and clothed her with imaginary charms.

with an autumnal beauty, with the majestic and serene softness of an October twilight, and with the last blossoms which fall to the walks strewn with dead leaves.

But although their connection had lasted for many years, though they were as closely bound to each other as if they had been married, and although Charlotte Guindal pestered him with entreaties, and upset him with continual quarrels on the subject, despite also the fact that he believed her to be absolutely faithful to him and worthy of his most perfect confidence and love, Monsieur de Saint-Juéry had never been able to make up his mind to give her his name, and to put their connection on a legal footing.

He really suffered from this, but remained firm and defended his position, quibbled, sought for subterfuges, and replied by the eternal and vague: "What would be the good of it?" This made Charlotte furious and caused her to say angry and ill-tempered things. But he remained passive and listless, with his back bent like a restive horse under the whip.

He asked her whether it was really

necessary to their happiness, as they had no children. Did not everybody think that they were married? Was not she everywhere called Madame de Saint-Juéry and had their servants any doubt that they were in the service of respectable, married people? Was not the name which had been transmitted to a man from father to son, unstained, honored, and often with a halo of glory round it, a sacred trust, which no one had a right to touch? What would she gain if she bore it legitimately? Did she for a moment suppose that she would rise higher in people's estimation and be admitted into society, or that people would forget that she had been his regular mistress before becoming his wife? Did not everybody know that formerly, before he rescued her from that Bohemian life in which she had been vainly waiting for a chance, and was losing her good looks, Charlotte Guindal frequented all the public balls, and showed her legs liberally at the Moulin-Rouge?*

Charlotte knew his crabbed though kindly character—a character at the same time logical and obstinate—too well to hope that she would ever be able to overcome his opposition and scruples, except by some clever, feminine trick, some piece of comedy. So she appeared to be satisfied with his reasons and to renounce her desire. Outwardly she showed an equable and conciliatory temper, and no longer worried Monsieur de Saint-Juéry with her recriminations. Thus time went by in calm monotony, without fruitless battles or fierce disputes.

Charlotte Guindal's medical man was Doctor Rabatel, one of those clever

men who appear to know everything, but whom a country surgeon would shame by a few questions. He was one of those men who wish to impress everybody with their apparent value, and who make use of their medical knowledge as if it were some productive commercial house, which carried on a suspicious business; who can scent out persons whom they can manage as they please, as if they were a piece of wax, keeping them in a state of continual terror by holding the idea of death constantly before their eyes.

Having obtained this mastery they scrutinize their patients' consciences as well as the cleverest priest could do, make sure of being well paid for their complicity as soon as they have obtained a footing anywhere, and find out the family secrets in order to use them as a weapon for extorting money on occasions.

Dr. Rabatel felt sure immediately that this middle-aged lady wanted something of him. By some extraordinary perversion of taste, he was rather fond of the remains of a good-looking woman, if they were well got up, and offered to him. He liked that high flavor which arises from soft lips made tender through years of love, from gray hair powered with gold, from a body engaged in its last struggle, which dreams of one more victory before abdicating power altogether. So he did not hesitate to become his new patient's lover.

When winter came, however, a thorough change took place in Charlotte's health, which had hitherto been so good.

*A *café chantant* and casino.

She had no strength left, she felt ill after the slightest exertion, complained of internal pains, and spent whole days lying on the couch, with set eyes and without uttering a word, so that everybody thought that she was dying of one of those mysterious maladies which cannot be coped with, but by degrees undermine the whole human system. It was sad to see her sinking, lying motionless on her pillows. A mist seemed to have come over her eyes, her hands lay helplessly on the bed, and her mouth seemed sealed by some invisible finger. Monsieur de Saint-Juéry was in despair; he cried like a child, and he winced as if somebody had plunged a knife into him when the doctor said to him in his unctuous voice:

"I know that you are a brave man, my dear sir, and I may venture to tell you the whole truth. Madame de Saint-Juéry is doomed, irrevocably doomed. Nothing but a miracle can save her, and alas! there are no miracles in these days. The end is only a question of a few hours, and may come quite suddenly."

Monsieur de Saint-Juéry had thrown himself into a chair, and was sobbing bitterly, covering his face with his hands.

"My poor dear, my poor darling," he said, through his tears.

"Pray compose yourself, and be brave," the doctor continued, sitting down by his side, "for I have something serious to say to you, and to convey to you our poor patient's last wishes. A few minutes ago, she told me the secret of your double life, and of your connection with her. In view

of death, which she feels approaching rapidly, for she is under no delusion, the unhappy woman wishes to die at peace with Heaven, with the consolation of having corrected her equivocal position and of having become your wife."

Monsieur de Saint-Juéry sat upright, with a bewildered look, while he moved his hands nervously; in his grief he was incapable of manifesting any will of his own, or of opposing this unexpected attack.

"Oh! anything that Charlotte wishes, doctor; anything, and I will myself go and tell her so, on my knees!"

* * * * *

The wedding took place discreetly, with something funereal about it, in the darkened room, where the words which were spoken had a strange sound, almost of anguish. Charlotte, who was lying in bed, her eyes dilated through happiness, had put both trembling hands into those of Monsieur de Saint-Juéry, and she seemed to expire with the word "Yes" on her lips. The doctor looked at the moving scene, grave and impassive, his chin buried in his white cravat, and his two arms resting on the mantelpiece, while his eyes twinkled behind his glasses.

The next week, Madame de Saint-Juéry began to get better, and that wonderful recovery, about which Monsieur Saint-Juéry with effusive gratitude tells everybody who will listen to him, has so increased Doctor Rabatel's reputation that at the next election he will be made a member of the Academy of Medicine.

VOLUME VI

A Mésalliance

IT is a generally acknowledged truth that the prerogatives of the nobility are only maintained at the present time through the weakness of the middle classes. Many of these, who have established themselves and their families by their intellect, industry, and struggles, fall into a state of bliss, which reminds those who see it of intoxication, as soon as they are permitted to enter aristocratic circles, or can be seen in public with barons and counts, and above all, when these treat them in a friendly manner, no matter from what motive, or when they see a prospect of a daughter of theirs driving in a carriage with armorial bearings on the panels.

Many women and girls of the citizen class would not hesitate for a moment to refuse an honorable, good-looking man of their own class, in order to go to the altar with the oldest, ugliest, and stupidest dotard among the aristocracy.

I shall never forget saying in joke, shortly before her marriage, to a young, well-educated girl of a wealthy, middle-class family, who had the figure and the bearing of a queen, not to forget an ermine cloak in her trousseau.

"I know it would suit me capitally," she replied in all seriousness, "and I should certainly have worn one if I had married Baron R——, which I was nearly doing, as you know, but it is not suitable for the wife of a government official."

When a girl of the middle classes wanders from the paths of virtue, her fall may, as a rule, be rightly ascribed to her hankering after the nobility.

In a small German town there lived,

some years ago, a tailor whom we will call Löwenfuss, a man who, like all knights of the shears, was equally full of aspirations after culture and liberty. After working for one master for some time as a poor journeyman, he married his daughter, and after his father-in-law's death succeeded to the business. As he was industrious, lucky, and managed it well, he soon grew very well off, and was in a position to give his daughters an education which many a nobleman's children might have envied. They learned not only French and music, but also acquired many more solid branches of knowledge, and as they were both pretty and charming girls, they soon became much thought of and sought after.

Fanny, the elder, was especially her father's pride and a favorite in society. She was of middle height, slim, with a thoroughly maidenly figure, and with an almost Italian face, in which two large, dark eyes seemed to ask for love and submission at the same time. Yet this girl with her plentiful, black hair was not in the least intended to command, for she was one of those romantic women who will give themselves, or even throw themselves, away, but who can never be subjugated. A young physician fell in love with her, and wished to marry her; Fanny returned his love, and her parents gladly accepted him as a son-in-law. But she made it a condition that he should visit her freely and frequently for two years, before she would consent to become his wife, and she declared that she would not go to the altar with him until she was convinced that not only their hearts

but also that their characters harmonized. He agreed to her wish, and became a regular visitor at the house of the educated tailor; they were happy hours for the lovers; they played, sang, and read together, and he told the girl some of his medical experiences which excited and moved her.

Just then, an officer went one day to the tailor's shop to order some civilian's clothes. This was not an unusual event in itself, but it was soon to be the cause of one; for accidentally the daughter of *the artist in clothes* came into the shop, just as the officer was leaving it. On seeing her, he paused and asked the tailor who the young lady was.

"My daughter," the tailor said, proudly.

"May I beg you to introduce me to the young lady, Herr Löwenfuss?" said the hussar.

"I feel flattered at the honor you are doing me," the tailor replied, with evident pleasure.

"Fanny, the captain wishes to make your acquaintance; this is my daughter Fanny, Captain—"

"Captain Count Kasimir W——," the hussar interrupted him, as he went up to the pretty girl, and paid her a compliment or two. They were very commonplace, stale, everyday phrases, but in spite of this they pleased the girl, intelligent as she was, because it was a cavalry officer and a Count to boot who addressed them to her. And when at last the captain in the most friendly manner, asked the tailor's permission to be allowed to visit at his house, both father and daughter granted it to him most readily.

The very next day Count W—— paid his visit, in full-dress uniform, and when Frau Löwenfuss made some observations about it, how handsome it was, and how well it became him, he told them that he should not wear it much longer, as he intended to quit the service soon, and to look for a wife in whom birth and wealth were matters of secondary consideration, while a good education and a knowledge of domestic matters were of paramount importance; adding that as soon as he had found one, he meant to retire to his estates.

From that moment, papa and mamma Löwenfuss looked upon the Count as their daughter's suitor. It is certain that he was madly in love with Fanny; he used to go to their house every evening, and made himself so looked for by all of them that the young doctor soon felt himself to be superfluous, and so his visits became rarer and rarer. The Count confessed his love to Fanny on a moonlight night, while they were sitting in an arbor covered with honeysuckle, which formed nearly the whole of Herr Löwenfuss's garden. He swore that he loved, that he adored her, and when at last she lay trembling in his arms he tried to take her by storm. But that bold cavalry exploit did not succeed, and the good-looking hussar found out for the first time in his life that a woman can at the same time be romantic, passionately in love, and virtuous.

The next morning the tailor called on the Count, and begged him very humbly to state what his intentions with regard to Fanny were. The enamored hussar declared that he was de-

terminated to make the tailor's little daughter Countess W——. Herr Löwenfuss was so much overcome by his feelings, that he showed great inclination to embrace his future son-in-law. The Count, however, laid down certain conditions. The whole matter must be kept a profound secret, for he had every prospect of inheriting half-a-million of florins,* on the death of an aunt who was already eighty years old, which he should risk by a *mésalliance*.

When they heard this, the girl's parents certainly hesitated for a time to give their consent to the marriage, but the handsome hussar, whose ardent passion carried Fanny away, at last gained the victory. The doctor received a pretty little note from the tailor's daughter, in which she told him that she gave him back his promise, as she had not found her ideal in him. Fanny then signed a deed, by which she formally renounced all claims to her father's property, in favor of her sister, and left her home and her father's house with the Count under cover of the night, in order to accompany him to Poland, where the marriage was to take place in his castle.

Of course malicious tongues declared that the hussar had abducted Fanny. But her parents smiled at such reports, for they knew better, and the moment when their daughter would return as Countess W—— would amply recompense them for everything.

Meanwhile the Polish Count and the romantic German girl were being carried by the train through the dreary plains of Masovia.† They stopped in a large town to make some purchases, and the Count, who was very wealthy

and liberal, provided his future wife with everything that befitted a Countess and a girl could fancy, and then they continued their journey. The country grew more picturesque but more melancholy as they went further east; the somber Carpathians rose from the snow-covered plains, and villages, surrounded by white glistening walls, and stunted willows stood by the side of the roads, ravens sailed through the white sky, and here and there a small peasants' sledge shot by, drawn by two thin horses.

At last they reached the station. There the Count's steward was waiting for them with a carriage and four, which brought them to their destination almost as swiftly as the iron steed.

The numerous servants were drawn up in the yard of the ancient castle to receive their master and mistress, and gave loud cheers for her, for which she thanked them smilingly. When she went into the dim, arched passages, and the large rooms, for a moment she felt a strange feeling of fear, but she quickly checked it, for was not her most ardent wish to be fulfilled in a couple of hours?

She put on her bridal attire, in which a half-comical, half-sinister looking old woman with a toothless mouth and a nose like an owl's assisted her. Just as she was fixing the myrtle wreath on to her dark curls, the bell began to ring, which summoned her to her wedding. The Count himself, in full uniform, led her to the chapel of the castle, where the priest, with the steward and the castellan as witnesses, and the footmen

*About \$250,000.

†A division of Poland, of which Warsaw is the capital.

in grand liveries, were awaiting the handsome young couple.

After the wedding, the marriage certificate was signed in the vestry, and a groom was sent to the station, where he dispatched a telegram to her parents, to the effect that the hussar had kept his word, and that Fanny Löwenfuss had become Countess Faniska W —.

Then the newly-married couple sat down to a beautiful little dinner in company with the chaplain, the steward, and the castellan. The champagne made them all very cheerful, and at last the Count knelt down before his young and beautiful wife, boldly took her white satin slipper off her foot, filled it with wine, and emptied it to her health.

At length night came, a thorough, Polish wedding-night, and Faniska, who had just assumed a demi-toilette, was looking at herself with proud satisfaction in the great mirror that was fastened into the wall, from top to bottom. A white satin train flowed down behind her like rays from the moon, a half-open jacket of bright green velvet, trimmed with valuable ermine, covered her voluptuous, virgin bust and her classic arms, only to show them all the more seductively at the slightest motion, while the wealth of her dark hair, in which diamonds hung here and there like glittering dewdrops, fell down her neck and mingled with the white fur. The Count entered in a red velvet dressing-gown trimmed with sable; at a sign from him, the old woman who was waiting on his divinity left the room, and the next moment he was lying like a slave at the feet of his lovely young wife, who raised him up and was press-

ing him to her heaving bosom, when a noise which she had never heard before, a wild howling, startled the loving woman in the midst of her bliss.

"What was that?" she asked, trembling.

The Count went to the window without speaking, and she with him, her arms round him. She looked half timidly, half curiously out into the darkness, where large bright spots were moving about in pairs, in the park at her feet.

"Are they will-o'-the-wisps?" she whispered.

"No, my child, they are wolves," the Count replied, fetching his double-barreled gun, which he loaded. Then he went out on the snow-covered balcony, while she drew the fur more closely over her bosom, and followed him.

"Will you shoot?" the Count asked her in a whisper, and when she nodded, he said: "Aim straight at the first pair of bright spots that you see; they are the eyes of those amiable brutes."

Then he handed her the gun and pointed it for her.

"That is the way—are you pointing straight?"

"Yes."

"Then fire."

A flash, a report, which the echo from the hills repeated four times, and two of the unpleasant looking lights had vanished.

Then the Count fired, and by that time their people were all awake; they drove away the wolves with torches and laid the two large animals, the spoils of a Polish wedding-night, at the feet of their young mistress.

The days that followed resembled that

night. The Count showed himself a most attentive husband, his wife's knight and slave, and she felt quite at home in that dull castle. She rode, drove, smoked, read French novels, and beat her servants as well as any Polish Countess could have done. In the course of a few years, she presented the Count with two children, and although he appeared very happy at that, yet, like most husbands, he grew continually cooler, more indolent, and neglectful of her. From time to time he left the castle to see after his affairs in the capital, and the intervals between these journeys became continually shorter. Faniska felt that her husband was tired of her, and much as it grieved her, she did not let him notice it; she was always the same.

But at last the Count remained away altogether. At first he used to write, but at last the poor, weeping woman did not even receive letters to comfort her in her unhappy solitude, and his lawyer sent the money that she and the children required.

She conjectured, hoped, doubted, suffered, and wept for more than a year; then she suddenly went to the capital and appeared unexpectedly in his apartments. Painful explanations followed, until at last the Count told her that he no longer loved her, and would not live with her for the future. When she wished to make him do so by legal means, and intrusted her case to a celebrated lawyer, *the Count denied that she was his wife*. She produced her marriage certificate, and lo! the most infamous fraud came to light. A confidential ser-

vant of the Count had acted the part of the priest, so that the tailor's beautiful daughter had, as a matter of fact, merely been the Count's mistress, and her children therefore were bastards.

The virtuous woman then saw, when it was too late, that it was *she* who had formed a *mésalliance*. Her parents would have nothing to do with her, and at last it came out that the Count was married long before he knew her, but that he did not live with his wife.

Then Fanny applied to the police magistrates; she wanted to appeal to justice; but was dissuaded from taking criminal proceedings; for although they would certainly lead to the punishment of her daring seducer, they would also bring about her own ruin.

At last, however, her lawyer effected a settlement between them, which was favorable to Fanny, and which she accepted for the sake of her children. The Count paid her a considerable sum down, and gave her the gloomy castle to live in. Thither she returned with a broken heart, and from that time lived alone, a sullen misanthrope, a fierce despot.

From time to time, you may meet wandering through the Carpathians a pale woman of almost unearthly beauty, wearing a magnificent sable-skin jacket and carrying a gun over her shoulder, in the forest, or in the winter in a sledge, driving her foaming horses until they nearly drop from fatigue, while the harness bells utter a melancholy sound, and at last die away in the distance, like the weeping of a solitary, deserted human heart.

An Honest Deal

AMONG my numerous friends in Vienna there is an author who has always amused me by his childish idealism.

Not by his idealism from an abstract point of view, for in spite of my pessimism I am an absurd idealist, and because I am perfectly well aware of this, I never, as a rule, laugh at other people's idealism. But his brand was really too funny.

He was a serious man of great capabilities who only just fell short of being learned. He had a clear, critical intellect; was a man without any illusions about society, the state, literature, or anything else, and especially about women; but he was the craziest optimist as soon as he got upon the subject of actresses, theatrical princesses, and heroines. He was one of those men who, like Hackländer, cannot discover the Ideal of Virtue anywhere but in a ballet girl.

My friend was always in love with some actress or other—of course only platonically—and by preference with some girl of rising talent, whose literary knight he constituted himself, until the time came when her admirers laid something much more substantial than laurel wreaths at her feet. Then he withdrew and sought for fresh talent which would allow itself to be patronized by him.

He was never without a photograph of his ideal in his breast pocket, and when he was in a good temper, he used to show me one or other of them—whom I had of course never seen—with a knowing smile. Once, when we were sitting in a *café* in the Prater, he took out a portrait without saying a word, and laid it on the table before me.

It was the portrait of a beautiful woman, but what struck me in it first of all, was not the almost classic cut of her features, but her white eyes.

"If she had not the black hair of a living woman, I should take her for a statue," I said.

"Certainly," my friend replied; "for a statue of Venus, perhaps for the Venus of Milo herself."

"Who is she?"

"A young actress."

"That is a matter of course in your case; what I meant was, what is her name?"

My friend told me. It was a name which is at present one of the best known on the German stage, a name with which a number of earthly adventures are connected, as every Viennese knows. Compared with hers those of Venus herself were but innocent toying, but I then heard of her for the first time.

My idealist described her as a woman of the highest talent—which I believed, and as an angel of purity—which I did not believe; on that particular occasion, however, I at any rate did not believe the contrary.

A few days later, I was accidentally turning over the leaves of the portrait album of another intimate friend of mine, who was a thoroughly careless, somewhat dissolute Viennese, and I came across that strange, female face with the dead eyes again.

"How did you come by the picture of this Venus?" I asked him.

"Well, she certainly is a Venus," he replied, "but one of that cheap kind who

are to be met with in the Graben,* which is their ideal grove."

"Impossible!"

"I give you my word of honor it is so."

I could say nothing more after that. So my intellectual friend's new ideal, that woman of the highest dramatic talent, that wonderful woman with the white eyes, was a street Venus!

But my friend was right in one respect. He had not deceived himself with regard to her wonderful dramatic gifts, and she very soon made a career for herself. From being a mute character on some suburban stage, she rose in two years to be the leading actress at one of the principal theaters.

My friend interested himself in her behalf with the manager of it, who was not blinded by any prejudices. She acted in a rehearsal, and pleased him; whereupon he sent her to star in the provinces. My friend accompanied her, and took care she was well puffed.

She went on the boards as Schiller's "Marie Stuart," and achieved the most brilliant success. Before she had finished her starring tour, she obtained an engagement at a large theater in a northern town, where her appearance was the signal for a triumphant success.

Her reputation, that is her reputation as a most gifted actress, grew very high in less than a year, and the manager of the Court theater invited her to star there.

She was received with some doubt at first, but she soon overcame all prejudices and uncertainty; the applause grew more and more vehement at every performance, and at the close of the season her future was decided. She ob-

tained a splendid engagement, and soon afterward became a leader at the Court theater.

A well-known author wrote a racy novel, of which she was the heroine; one of the leading bankers and financiers was at her feet; she was a most popular personage, and the lioness of the capital; she had splendid apartments, and all her surroundings were of the most luxurious character. She had reached that stage in her career at which my idealistic friend, who had constituted himself her literary knight, quietly took his leave of her, and went in search of fresh talent.

But the beautiful woman with the dead eyes and the dead heart seemed destined to be the scourge of the idealists, quite against her will. Scarcely had one spread his wings and flown away from her, than another fell out of the nest into her net.

A very young student, who was neither handsome nor of good family, and certainly not rich or even well off, but who was enthusiastic, intellectual, and impressionable, saw her as "Marie Stuart," as "The Maid of Orléans," "The Lady with the Camelias," and in most of the plays of the best French dramatists, for the manager was making experiments with her, and she was doing the same with her talents.

The poor student was enraptured with the celebrated actress, and at the same time conceived a passion for the woman which bordered on madness.

He saved up penny by penny, he nearly starved himself, in order that he might be able to pay for a seat in the

*The street where most of the best shops are to be found, and much frequented by venal beauties.

gallery whenever she acted, and be able to devour her with his eyes. He always got a seat in the front row, for he was always outside three hours before the doors opened, so as to be one of the first to gain his Olympus, the seat of the theatrical enthusiasts. He grew pale, and his heart beat violently when she appeared; he laughed when she wept, applauded her, as if he had been paid to do it by the highest favors that a woman can bestow, and yet she did not know him, and was ignorant of his very existence.

The regular frequenters of the Court theater noticed him at last, and spoke about his infatuation for her, until at last she heard about him. Still she did not know him, and although he could not send her any costly jewelry, not even a bouquet, he at last succeeded in attracting her attention.

When she had finished acting and the audience had gone home, she would leave the theater wrapped in valuable furs and get into the carriage of her banker, which was waiting for her at the stage door. He always stood there, often up to his ankles in snow, or in the pouring rain.

At first she did not notice him, but when her maid said something to her in a whisper on one occasion, she looked round in surprise, and he got a look from those large eyes, which were not dead then, but dark and bright—a look which recompensed him for all his sufferings and filled him with a proud hope, which constantly gained more power over the young idealist, usually so modest.

At last there was a thorough, silent understanding between the theatrical

princess and her dumb adorer. When she put her foot on the carriage step, she looked round at him, and every time he stood there, devouring her with his eyes; she saw it and got contentedly into her carriage, but she did not see how he ran after her carriage, or how he reached her house, panting for breath, when she did, or how he lay down outside after the door had closed behind her.

One stormy summer night, when the wind was howling in the chimneys, and the rain was beating against the windows and on the pavement, the poor student was again lying on the stone steps outside her house. The front door was opened very cautiously and quietly; for it was not the economical banker who was leaving the house, but a wealthy young officer whom the maid was letting out; he kissed the pretty little Cerberus as he put a gold coin into her hand, and then accidentally trod on the idealist, who was lying outside.

They all three simultaneously uttered a cry; the girl blew out the candle, the officer instinctively half drew his sword, and the student ran away.

Ever since that night, the poor, crazy fellow went about with a dagger, which he concealed in his belt. It was his constant companion to the theater and the stage door, where the actress's carriage used to wait for her, and to her house, where he nightly kept his painful watch.

His first idea was to kill his fortunate rival, then himself, then the theatrical princess, but at last he lay down again outside her door, or stood on the pavement and watched the shadows that flitted hither and thither on her window,

his head turned by the magic spell of the woman.

And then, the most incredible thing happened, something which he could never have hoped for, and which he scarcely believed when it did occur.

One evening, when she had been playing a very important part, she kept her carriage waiting much longer than usual. At last she appeared, and got into it; she did not shut the door, however, but beckoned to the young idealist to follow her.

He was almost delirious with joy, just as a moment before he had been almost mad from despair. He obeyed her immediately, and during the drive he lay at her feet and covered her hands with kisses. She allowed it quietly and even merrily, and when the carriage stopped at her door, she let him lift her out of the carriage, and went upstairs leaning on his arm.

There, the lady's maid showed him into a luxuriously furnished drawing-room, while the actress changed her dress.

Presently she appeared in her *peignoir*, sat down carelessly in an easy chair, and asked him to sit down beside her.

"You take a great interest in me?" she said.

"You are my ideal!" the student cried enthusiastically.

The theatrical princess smiled, and said:

"Well, I will at any rate be an honest ideal; I will not deceive you, and you shall not be able to say that I have misused your youthful enthusiasm. I will give myself to you."

"Oh! Heavens!" the poor idealist exclaimed, throwing himself at her feet.

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" "Wait a moment!" she said, with a smile, I have not finished yet. I can only love a man who is in a position to provide me with all those luxuries which an actress or, if you like, which I, cannot do without. As far as I know you are poor, but I will belong to you—only for to-night, however—and in return you must promise me not to rave about me, or to follow me, from to-night. Will you do this?"

The wretched idealist was kneeling before her; he was having a terrible mental struggle.

"Will you promise me to do this?" she said again.

"Yes," he said, almost groaning.

The next morning a man who had buried his ideal tottered downstairs. He was pale enough; almost as pale as a corpse; but in spite of this, he is still alive, and if he has any ideal at all at present, it is certainly not a theatrical princess.

The Log

It was a small drawing-room, with thick hangings, and with a faint aromatic smell of flowers and scent in the

air. A large fire was burning in the grate, and one lamp, covered with a shade of old lace, on the corner of the mantel-

piece threw a soft light on to the two persons who were talking.

She, the mistress of the house, was an old lady with white hair, one of those adorable old ladies whose unwrinkled skin is as smooth as the finest paper, and is scented, impregnated with perfume, the delicate essences used in the bath for so many years having penetrated through the epidermis.

He was a very old friend, who had never married, a constant friend, a companion in the journey of life, but nothing else.

They had not spoken for about a minute, and were both looking at the fire, dreaming of nothing in particular. It was one of those moments of sympathetic silence between people who have no need to be constantly talking in order to be happy together. Suddenly a large log, a stump covered with burning roots, fell out. It fell over the firedogs on to the drawing-room floor, scattering great sparks all round. The old lady sprang up with a scream, as if to run away, but he kicked the log back on to the hearth and trod out the burning sparks with his boots.

When the disaster was repaired, there was a strong smell of burning. Sitting down opposite to his friend, the man looked at her with a smile, and said, as he pointed to the log:

"That accident recalls the reason I never married."

She looked at him in astonishment, with the inquisitive gaze of women who wish to know everything, eying him as women do who are no longer young, with intense and malicious curiosity. Then she asked:

"How so?"

"Oh! it is a long story," he replied; "a rather sad and unpleasant story.

"My old friends were often surprised at the coldness which suddenly sprang up between one of my best friends, whose Christian name was Julien, and myself. They could not understand how two such intimate and inseparable friends as we had been could suddenly become almost strangers to one another. I will tell you the reason of it.

"He and I used to live together at one time. We were never apart, and the friendship that united us seemed so strong that nothing could break it.

"One evening when he came home, he told me that he was going to be married, and it gave me a shock just as if he had robbed me or betrayed me. When a man's friend marries, all is over between them. The jealous affection of a woman, a suspicious, uneasy, and carnal affection, will not tolerate that sturdy and frank attachment, that attachment of the mind and of the heart, and the mutual confidence which exists between two men.

"However great the love may be that unites them, a man and a woman are always strangers in mind and intellect; they remain belligerents, they belong to different races. There must always be a conqueror and a conquered, a master and a slave; now the one, now the other—they are never equal. They press each other's hands, hands trembling with amorous passion; but they never press them with a long, strong, loyal pressure, a pressure which seems to open hearts and to lay them bare in a burst of sincere, strong, manly affection. Ancient philosophers, as a con-

solation for old age, sought for a good reliable friend, and grew old with him in that communion of thought which exists between men. They did not marry and procreate children who would, when grown, abandon them.

"Well, my friend Julien married. His wife was pretty, charming, a light, curly-haired, plump, bright little woman, who seemed to worship him. At first I went but rarely to their house, as I was afraid of interfering with their affection, and averse to being in their way. But somehow they attracted me to their house; they were constantly inviting me, and seemed very fond of me. Consequently, by degrees I allowed myself to be allured by the charm of their life. I often dined with them, and frequently, when I returned home at night, thought that I would do as he had done, and get married, as I found my empty house very dull. They seemed very much in love with one another, and were never apart.

"Well, one evening, Julien wrote and asked me to go to dinner, and naturally I went.

"'My dear fellow,' he said, 'I must go out directly afterward on business, and I shall not be back until eleven o'clock, but I shall not be later. Can I depend on you to keep Bertha company?'

"The young woman smiled.

"'It was my idea,' she said, 'to send for you.'

"I held out my hand to her.

"'You are as nice as ever,' I said, and I felt a long, friendly pressure of my fingers, but I paid no attention to it. We sat down to dinner, and at eight o'clock Julien went out.

"As soon as he had gone, a kind of strange embarrassment immediately seemed to come over his wife and me. We had never been alone together yet, and in spite of our daily increasing intimacy this *tête-à-tête* placed us in a new position. At first I spoke vaguely of those indifferent matters with which one fills up an embarrassing silence, but she did not reply, and remained opposite to me looking down in an undecided manner, as if thinking over some difficult subject. As I was at a loss for commonplace ideas, I held my tongue. It is surprising how hard it is at times to find anything to say.

"And then, again, I felt in the air, in my bones, so to speak, something which it is impossible for me to express, that mysterious premonition which tells you beforehand of the secret intentions, be they good or evil, of another person with respect to yourself.

"The painful silence lasted some time, and then Bertha said to me:

"'Will you kindly put a log on the fire, for it is going out.'

"So I opened the box where the wood was kept, which was placed just where yours is, took out the largest log, and put it on top of the others, which were three-parts burned, and then silence reigned in the room again.

"In a few minutes the log was burning so brightly that it scorched our faces, and the young woman raised her eyes to me—eyes that had a strange look to me.

"'It is too hot now,' she said; 'let us go and sit on the sofa over there.'

"So we went and sat on the sofa,

and then she said suddenly, looking me full in the face:

“‘What should you do if a woman were to tell you that she was in love with you?’

“‘Upon my word,’ I replied, very much at a loss for an answer, I cannot imagine such a case; but it would very much depend upon the woman.’

“She gave a hard, nervous, vibrating laugh; one of those false laughs which seem as if they would break thin glasses, and then she added: ‘Men are never venturesome or acute.’ And after a moment’s silence, she continued: ‘Have you ever been in love, Monsieur Paul?’ I was obliged to acknowledge that I certainly had been, and she asked me to tell her all about it, whereupon I made up some story or other. She listened to me attentively with frequent signs of approbation or contempt, and then suddenly she said:

“‘No, you understand nothing about the subject. It seems to me that real love must unsettle the mind, upset the nerves, and distract the head; that it must—how shall I express it?—be dangerous, even terrible, almost criminal and sacrilegious; that it must be a kind of treason; I mean to say that it is almost bound to break laws, fraternal bonds, sacred obstacles; when love is tranquil, easy, lawful, and without danger, is it really love?’

“I did not know what answer to give her, and this philosophical reflection occurred to me: ‘Oh! female brain, here indeed you show yourself!’

“While speaking, she had assumed a demure, saintly air; and resting on the cushions, she stretched herself out at full length, with her head on my

shoulders and her dress pulled up a little, so as to show her red silk stockings, which looked still brighter in the firelight. In a minute or two she continued:

“‘I suppose I have frightened you?’” I protested against such a notion, and she leaned against my breast altogether, and without looking at me she said: ‘If I were to tell you that I love you, what would you do?’

“And before I could think of an answer, she had thrown her arms round my neck, had quickly drawn my head down and put her lips to mine.

“My dear friend, I can tell you that I did not feel at all happy! What! deceive Julien?—become the lover of this little, silly, wrong-headed, cunning woman, who was no doubt terribly sensual, and for whom her husband was already not sufficient! To betray him continually, to deceive him, to play at being in love merely because I was attracted by forbidden fruit, danger incurred and friendship betrayed! No, that did not suit me, but what was I to do? To imitate Joseph would be acting a very stupid and, moreover, difficult part, for this woman was maddening in her perfidy, inflamed by audacity, palpitating, and excited. Let the man who has never felt on his lips the warm kiss of a woman who is ready to give herself to him throw the first stone at me!

“Well, a minute more—you understand what I mean? A minute more and—I should have been—no, she would have been—when a loud noise made us both jump up. The log had fallen into the room, knocking over the fire-irons and the fender, and was

scorching the carpet, having rolled under an armchair.

"I jumped up like a madman, and as I was replacing the log on the fire, the door opened hastily, and Julien came in.

"'I have done,' he said, in evident pleasure. "The business was over two hours sooner than I expected!"

"Yes, my dear friend, without that log, I should have been caught in the very act, and you know what the consequences would have been!

"You may be sure that I took good care never to be overtaken in a similar situation again; never, never. Soon afterward I saw Julien was giving me the 'cold shoulder,' as they say. His wife was evidently undermining our friendship; by degrees he got rid of me, and we have altogether ceased to meet.

"That is why I have not got married; it ought not to surprise you, I think."

Delila

IN a former reminiscence, we made the acquaintance of a lady who had done the police many services in former years, and whom we called Wanda von Chabert. It is no exaggeration, if we say that she was at the same time the cleverest, the most charming, and the most selfish woman one could possibly meet. She was certainly not exactly what is called beautiful, for neither her face nor her figure were symmetrical enough for that, but if her head was not beautiful in the style of the antique, neither like the "Venus" of Milo nor Ludovisi's "Juno," it was, on the other hand, in the highest sense delightful, like the ladies whom Watteau and Mignard painted. Everything in her little face, framed by soft brown hair, was attractive and seductive; her low, Grecian forehead, her bright, almond-shaped eyes, her small nose, her full voluptuous lips, her middling height, and her small waist with its, perhaps, almost too full bust, and above

all her walk, that half indolent, half coquettish swaying of her hips, were all maddeningly alluring.

And this woman, who was born for love, was as eager for pleasure and as amorous as few other women have ever been. For that very reason she never ran any danger of allowing her victims to escape from her pity. On the contrary, she soon grew tired of each of her favorites, and her connection with the police was then extremely useful to her, in getting rid of an inconvenient or jealous lover.

Before the war between Austria and Italy in 1859, Frau von Chabert was in London, where she lived alone in a small, one-storied house with her servants, in constant communication with emigrants from all countries.

She herself was thought to be a Polish refugee, and the luxury by which she was surrounded, and her fondness for sport, and above all for horses, which was remarkable even in England,

made people give her the title of Countess. At that period Count T—— was one of the most prominent members of the Hungarian propaganda, and Frau von Chabert was commissioned to pay particular attention to all he said and did. But in spite of all the trouble she took, she had not hitherto even succeeded in making his acquaintance. He lived the life of a misanthrope, quite apart from the great social stream of London, and he was not believed to be either gallant, or ardent in love. Fellow-countrymen of his, who had known him during the Magyar revolution, described him as very cautious, cold, and silent, so that if any man possessed a charm against the toils which she set for him, it was he.

Just then it happened that as Wanda was riding in Hyde Park quite early one morning before there were many people about, her thoroughbred English mare took fright, and threatened to throw the plucky rider, who did not for a moment lose her presence of mind, from the saddle. Before her groom had time to come to her assistance, a man in a Hungarian braided coat rushed from the path, and caught hold of the animal's reins. When the mare had grown quite quiet, he was about to go away with a slight bow, but Frau von Chabert detained him, so that she might thank him and so have the leisure to examine him more closely. He was neither young nor handsome, but was well made like all Hungarians are, with an interesting and very expressive face. He had a sallow complexion, set off by a short, black full beard, and he looked as if he were

suffering. He fixed two, great, black fanatical eyes on the beautiful young woman who was smiling at him so amiably, and it aroused in the soul of the excitable woman that violent but passing feeling which she called love. She turned her horse and accompanied the stranger at a walk, and he seemed to be even more charmed by her chatter than by her appearance, for his grave face grew more and more animated, and at last he himself became quite friendly and talkative. When he took leave of her, Wanda gave him her card, on the back of which her address was written, and he immediately gave her his in return.

She thanked him and rode off, looking at his name as she did so; it was Count T——.

She felt inclined to give a shout of pleasure when she found that the noble quarry she had been hunting so long had at last come into her toils. But she did not even turn her head round to look at him, such was the command which that woman had over herself and her movements.

Count T—— called upon her the very next day; soon he came every day, and in less than a month after that innocent adventure in Hyde Park, he was at her feet; for when Frau von Chabert made up her mind to be loved, nobody was able to withstand her. She became the Count's confidant almost as speedily as she had become his mistress, and every day and almost every hour she, with the most delicate coquetry, laid fresh fetters on the Hungarian Samson. Did she love him?

Certainly she did, after her own fashion, and at first she had not the

remotest idea of betraying him; she even succeeded in completely concealing her connection with him, not only in London but also in Vienna.

Then the war of 1859 broke out, and like most Hungarian and Polish refugees, Count T—— hurried off to Italy, in order to place himself at the disposal of that great and patriotic Piedmontese statesman, Cavour.

Wanda went with him, and took the greatest interest in his revolutionary intrigues in Turin; for some time she seemed to be his right hand, and it looked as if she had become unfaithful to her present patrons. Through his means, she soon became on intimate terms with the Piedmontese government circles, and that was his destruction.

A young Italian diplomatist, who frequently negotiated with Count T——, or in his absence, with Wanda, fell madly in love with the charming Polish woman. Wanda, who was never cruel, more especially when she herself had caught fire, allowed herself to be conquered by the handsome, intellectual, daring man. In measure as her passion for the Italian increased, so her feeling for Count T—— declined, till at last she felt that her connection with him was nothing but a hindrance and a burden. As soon as Wanda had reached that point, her adored was as good as lost.

Count T—— was not a man whom she could just coolly dismiss, or with whom she might venture to trifle, and this she knew perfectly well. So in order to avoid a catastrophe, the consequences of which might be incalculable for her, she did not let him notice

the change in her feelings toward him at first, and kept the Italian, who belonged to her, at proper distance.

When peace had been concluded, and the great, peaceful revolution which found its provisional settlement in the Constitution of February, and in the Hungarian agreement, began in Austria, the Hungarian refugees determined to send Count T—— to Hungary, that he might assume the direction of affairs there. But as he was still an outlaw, and as the death sentence of Arad hung over his head like the sword of Damocles, he consulted with Wanda about the ways and means of reaching his fatherland unharmed and of remaining there undiscovered. Although that clever woman thought of a plan immediately, yet she told Count T—— that she would think the matter over. She did not bring forward her proposition for a few days, but when she did, it was received by the Count and his friends with the highest approval, and was immediately carried into execution. Frau von Chabert went to Vienna as Marchioness Spinola, and Count T—— accompanied her as her footman; he had cut his hair short and shaved off his beard, so that in his livery, he was quite unrecognizable. They passed the frontier in safety, and reached Vienna without any interference from the authorities. There they first of all went to a small hotel, but soon took a small handsome flat in the center of the town. Count T—— immediately hunted up some members of his party, who had been in constant communication with the emigrants since Világos, and the conspiracy was soon in excellent train. Wanda spent her time with

a hussar officer, without, however, losing sight of her lover and his dangerous activity for a moment, on that account.

And at last, when the fruit was ripe for falling into her lap, she was sitting in the private room of the Minister of Police, opposite to the man with whom she was going to make the evil compact.

"The emigrants must be very uneasy and disheartened at an agreement with, and reconciliation to, Hungary," he began.

"Do not deceive yourself," Frau von Chabert replied; "nothing is more dangerous in politics than optimism, and the influence of the revolutionary propaganda was never greater than it is at present. Do not hope to conciliate the Magyars by half concessions, and above all things, do not underestimate the movement which is being organized openly, in broad daylight."

"You are afraid of a revolution?"

"I know that they are preparing for one, and that they expect everything from that alone."

The skeptical man smiled.

"Give me something besides views and opinions, and then I will believe."

"I will give you the proof," Wanda said, "but before I do you the greatest service that lies in my power, I must be sure that I shall be rewarded for all my skill and trouble."

"Can you doubt it?"

"I will be open with you," Wanda continued. "During the insurrectionary war in Transylvania, Urban had excellent spies, but they have not been paid to this day. I want money."

"How much?"

With inimitable ease, the beautiful woman mentioned a considerable sum. The skeptical man got up to give a few orders, and a short time afterward the money was in Wanda's hands.

"Well?"

"The emigrants have sent one of their most influential and talented members to organize the revolution in Hungary."

"Have they sent him already?"

"More than that: Count T—— is in Vienna at this moment."

"Do you know where he is hiding?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure that you are not mistaken?"

"I am most assuredly not mistaken," she replied with a frivolous laugh; "Count T——, who was my admirer in London and Turin, is here in my house, as my footman."

An hour later, the Count was arrested. But Wanda only wished to get rid of her tiresome adorer, and not to destroy him. She had been on the most intimate terms with him, and had taken part in his political plans and intrigues long enough to be able to give the most reliable information about him personally, as well as about his intentions. That information was of such kind that, in spite of the past, and of the Count's revolutionary standpoint, they thought they had in him the man who was capable of bringing about a real reconciliation between the monarch and his people. In consequence of this, Count T——, who thought that he had incurred the gallows, stood in the Emperor's presence, and the manner in which the latter expressed his generous intentions with re-

gard to Hungary carried the old rebel away, and he gave him his word of honor that he would bring the nation back to him, reconciled. And he kept his word, although, perhaps, not exactly in the sense in which he gave it.

He was allowed full liberty in going to Hungary, and Wanda accompanied him. He had no suspicion that even in his mistress's arms he was under police supervision, and from the moment when he made his appearance in his native land officially, as the intermediary between the crown and the people, she had a fresh interest in binding a man of such importance, whom everybody regarded as Hungary's future Minister-President, to herself.

He began to negotiate, and at first everything went well. But soon the yielding temper of the government gave rise continually to fresh demands. Before long, what one side offered and what the other side demanded were so far apart that no immediate agree-

ment could be thought of. The Count's position grew more painful every day; he had pledged himself too deeply to both sides, and in vain he sought for a way out of the difficulty.

Then one day the Minister of Police unexpectedly received a letter from Wanda, in which she told him that Count T——, urged on by his fellow-countrymen, and branded as a traitor by the emigrants, was on the point of heading a fresh conspiracy.

Thereupon, the government energetically reminded that thoroughly honest and noble man of his word of honor, and Count T——, who saw that he was unable to keep it, ended his life by a pistol bullet.

Frau von Chabert left Hungary immediately after the sad catastrophe, and went to Turin, where new lovers, new splendors, and new laurels awaited her.

We may, perhaps, hear more of her.

The Ill-omened Groom

AN impudent theft, to a very large amount, had been committed in the Capital. Jewels, a valuable watch set with diamonds, a miniature in a frame studded with brilliants, and a considerable sum in money, the whole amounting in value to a hundred and fifteen thousand florins,* had been stolen. The banker himself went to the Director of Police,† to give notice of the robberies, but at the same time begged as a special favor, that the investigation might

be carried on as quietly and considerately as possible, as he declared that he had not the slightest ground for suspecting anybody in particular, and did not wish any innocent person to be accused.

'First of all, give me the names of all the persons who regularly go into your bedroom,' the Police-director said.

*About \$57,500.

†Head of the Criminal Investigation Department.—EDITOR.

"Nobody, except my wife, my children, and Joseph, my valet; a man for whom I would answer, as I would for myself."

"Then you think him absolutely incapable of committing such a deed?"

"Most decidedly I do," the banker replied.

"Very well, then. Now, can you remember whether on the day on which you first missed the articles that have been stolen, or on any day immediately preceding it, anybody who was not a member of your household happened by chance to go to your bedroom?"

The banker thought for a moment, and then said with some hesitation:

"Nobody, absolutely nobody."

The experienced official, however, was struck by the banker's slight embarrassment and momentary blush. So he took his hand, and looking him straight in the face, he said:

"You are not quite candid with me; somebody was with you, and you wish to conceal the fact from me. You must tell me everything."

"No, no; indeed there was nobody here."

"Then at present there is only one person on whom any suspicion can rest—and that is your valet."

"I will vouch for his honesty," the banker replied immediately.

"You may be mistaken, and I shall be obliged to question the man."

"May I beg you to do it with every possible consideration?"

"You may rely upon me for that."

An hour later, the banker's valet was in the Police-director's private room. The latter first of all looked at his man very closely, and then came to the

conclusion that such an honest, unembarrassed face and such quiet, steady eyes could not possibly belong to a criminal.

"Do you know why I have sent for you?"

"No, your Honor."

"A large theft has been committed in your master's house," the Police-director continued, "from his bedroom. Do you suspect anybody? Who has been into the room within the last few days?"

"Nobody but myself, except my master's family."

"Do you not see, my good fellow, that by saying that, you throw suspicion on yourself?"

"Surely, sir," the valet exclaimed, "you do not believe—"

"I must not believe anything; my duty is merely to investigate and to follow up any traces that I may discover," was the reply. "If you have been the only person to go into the room within the last few days, I must hold you responsible."

"My master knows me—"

The Police-director shrugged his shoulders. "Your master has vouched for your honesty, but that is not enough for me. You are the only person on whom, at present, any suspicion rests, and therefore I must—sorry as I am to do so—have you arrested."

"If that is so," the man said, after some hesitation, "I prefer to speak the truth, for my good name is more to me than my situation. Somebody was in my master's apartments yesterday."

"And this somebody was—?"

"A lady."

"A lady of his acquaintance?"

The valet did not reply for some time.

"It must come out," he said at length. "My master has a mistress—you understand, sir, a blond, beautiful woman. He has furnished a house for her and goes to see her, but secretly of course, for if my mistress were to find it out, there would be a terrible scene. This person was with him yesterday."

"Were they alone?"

"I showed her in, and she was in his bedroom with him; but I had to call him out after a short time, as his confidential clerk wanted to speak to him, and so she was in the room alone for about a quarter of an hour."

"What is her name?"

"Cæcilia K——, she is a Hungarian." At the same time, the valet gave him her address.

Then the Director of Police sent for the banker, who, on being brought face to face with his valet, was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the facts which the latter had alleged, painful as it was for him to do so; whereupon orders were given to take Cæcilia K—— into custody.

In less than half an hour, however, the police officer who had been dispatched for that purpose returned and said that she had left her apartments, and most likely the Capital also, the previous evening. The unfortunate banker was almost in despair. Not only had he been robbed of a hundred and fifteen thousand florins, but at the same time he had lost the beautiful woman whom he loved with all the passion of which he was capable. He could not grasp the idea that a woman whom he

had surrounded with Asiatic luxury, whose strangest whims he had gratified, and whose tyranny he had borne so patiently, could have deceived him so shamefully. And now he had a quarrel with his wife, and an end of all domestic peace, into the bargain.

The only thing the police could do was to raise a hue and cry after the lady, who had denounced herself by her flight, but it was all of no use. In vain did the banker, in whose heart hatred and thirst for revenge had taken the place of love, implore the Director of Police to employ every means to bring the beautiful criminal to justice, and in vain did he undertake to be responsible for all the costs of her prosecution, no matter how heavy they might be. Special police officers were told off to try and discover her, but Cæcilia K—— was so rude as not to allow herself to be caught.

Three years had passed, and the unpleasant story appeared to have been forgotten. The banker had obtained his wife's pardon and—what he cared about a good deal more—had found another charming mistress, and the police did not appear to trouble themselves about the beautiful Hungarian any more.

We must now change the scene to London. A wealthy lady who created much sensation in society, and who made many conquests both by her beauty and her free behavior, was in want of a groom. Among the many applicants for the situation there was a young man, whose good looks and manners gave people the impression that he must have been very well educated. This was a recommendation in the eyes of the lady's

maid, and she took him immediately to her mistress's boudoir. When he entered he saw a beautiful, voluptuous looking woman of at most, twenty-five years of age, with large, bright eyes, and with blue-black hair which seemed to increase the brilliancy of her fair complexion, lying on a sofa. She looked at the young man, who also had thick, black hair. He turned his glowing black eyes to the floor, beneath her searching gaze, with evident satisfaction, and she seemed particularly taken with his slender, athletic build. Then she said half lazily and half proudly:

"What is your name?"

"Lajos Mariassi."

"A Hungarian?"

And there was a strange look in her eyes.

"Yes."

"How did you come here?"

"I am one of the many emigrants who have forfeited their country and their life. I, who come of a good family, and who was an officer of the Honveds, must now go into service, and thank God if I find a mistress who is at the same time beautiful and an aristocrat, as you are."

Miss Zoë—that was the lovely woman's name—smiled, and at the same time showed two rows of pearly teeth.

"I like your looks," she said, "and I feel inclined to take you into my service if you are satisfied with my terms."

"A lady's whim," said the maid to herself, when she noticed the ardent looks which Miss Zoë gave her manservant; "it will soon pass away." But that experienced female was mistaken that time.

Zoë was really in love, and the respect with which Lajos treated her put her into a very bad temper. One evening, when she intended to go to the Italian Opera, she countermanded her carriage, refused to see the noble adorer who wished to throw himself at her feet, and ordered her groom to be sent up to her boudoir.

"Lajos," she began, "I am not at all satisfied with you."

"Why, Madame?"

"I do not wish to have you about me any longer; here are your wages for three months. Leave the house immediately." And she began to walk up and down the room impatiently.

"I will obey you, Madame," the groom replied, "but I shall not take my wages."

"Why not?" she asked hastily.

"Because then I should be under your authority for three months," Lajos said, "and I intend to be free, this very moment, so that I may be able to tell you that I entered your service, not for the sake of your money, but because I love and adore you as a beautiful woman."

"You love me!" Zoë exclaimed. "Why did you not tell me sooner? I merely wished to banish you from my presence, because I love you, and did not think that you loved me. But you shall smart for having tormented me so. Come to my feet immediately."

The groom kneeled before the lovely creature, whose moist lips sought his at the same instant.

From that moment Lajos became her favorite. Of course he was not allowed to be jealous, as a young lord was still her official lover, and had the pleasure

of paying for everything. Besides, there was a whole army of so-called "good friends," who were fortunate enough to obtain a smile now and then, and occasionally something more, and who, in return, had permission to present her with rare flowers or diamonds.

The more intimate Zoë became with Lajos, the more uncomfortable she felt when he looked at her, as he frequently did, with undisguised contempt. She was wholly under his influence and was afraid of him, and one day, when he was playing with her dark curls, he said jerringly:

"It is said that contrasts usually attract each other, and yet you are as dark as I am."

She smiled, then tore off her black curls, and immediately the most charming, fair-haired woman was sitting by the side of Lajos, who looked at her attentively, but without any surprise.

He left his mistress at about midnight, in order to look after the horses,

as he said, and she put on a very pretty nightdress and went to bed. She remained awake for fully an hour, expecting her lover, and then she went to sleep. But in two hours' time she was roused from her slumbers, and saw a Police Inspector and two constables by the side of her magnificent bed.

"Whom do you want?" she cried.

"Cæcilia K——."

"I am Miss Zoë."

"Oh! I know you," the Inspector said with a smile; "be kind enough to take off your dark locks, and you will be Cæcilia K——. I arrest you, in the name of the law."

"Good heavens!" she stammered, "Lajos has betrayed me."

"You are mistaken, Madame," the Inspector replied; "he has merely done his duty."

"What? Lajos—my lover?"

"No, Lajos, the detective."

Cæcilia got out of bed, and the next moment sank fainting on to the floor.

The Odalisque of Senichou

IN SENICHOU, which is a suburb of Prague, there lived about twenty years ago two poor but honest people, who earned their bread by the sweat of their brow. The man worked in a large printing establishment, and his wife employed her spare time as a laundress. Their pride and their only pleasure was their daughter Viteska, a vigorous, voluptuous, handsome girl of eighteen, whom they brought up very well and carefully. She worked as a dressmaker, and was thus

able to help her parents a little. She made use of her leisure moments to improve her education, and especially her music, was a general favorite in the neighborhood on account of her quiet and modest demeanor, and was looked upon as a model by the whole suburb.

When she went to work in town, the tall girl, with her magnificent head—which resembled that of an ancient Amazon in its wealth of black hair—and dark, sparkling yet liquid eyes, at-

tracted the looks of passers-by, in spite of her shabby dress, much more than the graceful, well-dressed ladies of the aristocracy. Frequently some wealthy young loungeur would follow her home; and even try to get into conversation with her, but she always managed to get rid of them and their importunities. She did not require any protector, for she was quite capable of protecting herself from any insults.

One evening, however, she met a man on the suspension bridge whose strange appearance drew from her a look which evinced some interest, but perhaps even more surprise. He was a tall, handsome man with bright eyes and a black beard, was very sunburned, and in his long coat—which was like a caftan—with a red fez on his head, he gave those who saw him the impression of an Oriental. He had noticed her look all the more as he himself had been struck by her poor, and at the same time regal, appearance. He remained standing and looking at her in such a way that he seemed to be devouring her with his eyes, and Viteska, who was usually so fearless, looked down. She hurried on and he followed her; the quicker she walked, the more rapidly he followed her, and, at last, when they were in a narrow, dark street in the suburb, he suddenly said in an insinuating voice:

“May I offer you my arm, my pretty girl?”

“You can see that I am old enough to look after myself,” Viteska replied hastily; “I am much obliged to you, and must beg you not to follow me any more; I am known in this neighborhood, and it might damage my reputation.”

“Oh! You are very much mistaken

if you think you will get rid of me so easily,” he replied. “I have just come from the East and am returning there soon. Come with me, and as I fancy that you are as sensible as you are beautiful, you will certainly make your fortune there. I will bet that before the end of a year, you will be covered with diamonds and be waited on by eunuchs and female slaves.”

“I am a respectable girl, sir,” she replied proudly, and tried to go on in front, but the stranger was immediately at her side again

“You were born to rule,” he whispered to her. “Believe me, and I understand the matter, that you will live to be a Sultana, if you have any luck.”

The girl did not give him any answer, but walked on.

“But, at any rate, listen to me,” the tempter continued.

“I will not listen to anything; because I am poor, you think it will be easy for you to seduce me,” Viteska exclaimed; “but I am as virtuous as I am poor, and I should despise any position which I had to buy with my shame.”

They had reached the little house where her parents lived, and she ran in quickly and slammed the door behind her.

When she went into the town the next morning, the stranger was waiting at the corner of the street where she lived, and bowed to her very respectfully.

“Allow me to speak a few words with you,” he began. “I feel that I ought to beg your pardon for my behavior yesterday.”

“Please let me go on my way quietly,”

the girl replied. "What will the neighbors think of me?"

"I did not know you," he went on, without paying any attention to her angry looks, "but your extraordinary beauty attracted me. Now that I know that you are as virtuous as you are charming, I wish very much to become better acquainted with you. Believe me, I have the most honorable intentions."

Unfortunately, the bold stranger had taken the girl's fancy, and she could not find it in her heart to refuse him.

"If you are really in earnest," she stammered in charming confusion, "do not follow me about in the public streets, but come to my parents' house like a man of honor, and state your intentions there."

"I will certainly do so, and immediately, if you like," the stranger replied, eagerly.

"No, no," Viteska said; "but come this evening if you like."

The stranger bowed and left her, and really called on her parents in the evening. He introduced himself as Ireneus Krisapolis, a merchant from Smyrna, spoke of his brilliant circumstances, and finally declared that he loved Viteska passionately.

"That is all very nice and right," the cautious father replied, "but what will it all lead to? Under no circumstances can I allow you to visit my daughter. Such a passion as yours often dies out as quickly as it arises, and a respectable girl is easily robbed of her virtue."

"And suppose I make up my mind to marry your daughter?" the stranger asked, after a moment's hesitation.

"Then I shall refer you to my child,

for I shall never force Viteska to marry against her will," her father said.

The stranger seized the pretty girl's hand, and spoke in glowing terms of his love for her, of the luxury with which she would be surrounded in his house, of the wonders of the East, to which he hoped to take her, and at last Viteska consented to become his wife. Thereupon the stranger hurried on the arrangements for the wedding in a manner that made the most favorable impression on them all, and during the time before their marriage, he virtually lay at her feet like a humble slave.

As soon as they were married, the newly-married couple set off on their journey to Smyrna and promised to write as soon as they got there. But a month, then two and three, passed without the parents—whose anxiety increased every day—receiving a line from them until at last the father in terror applied to the police.

The first thing was to write to the Consul at Smyrna for information: his reply was to the effect that no merchant of the name of Ireneus Krisapolis was known in Smyrna, and that he had never been there. The police, at the entreaties of the frantic parents, continued their investigations, but for a long time without any result. At last, however, they obtained a little light on the subject, but it was not at all satisfactory. The police at Pesth said that a man whose personal appearance exactly agreed with the description of Viteska's husband had a short time before carried off two girls from the Hungarian capital to Turkey, evidently intending to trade in that coveted, valuable commodity there, but that when he found that the authorities

were on his track he had escaped from justice by sudden flight.

* * * * *

Four years after Viteska's mysterious disappearance, two persons, a man and a woman, met in a narrow street in Damascus, in a manner scarcely less strange than that in which the Greek merchant met Viteska on the suspension bridge in Prague. The man with the black beard, the red fez, and the long, green caftan, was no one else than Ireneus Krisapolis; matters appeared to be going well with him; he had his hands comfortably thrust into the red shawl which he had round his waist, and a negro was walking behind him with a large parasol, while another carried his *chibouque* after him. A noble Turkish lady met him in a litter borne by four slaves; she was wrapped like a ghost in a white veil, only that a pair of large, dark, threatening eyes flashed at the merchant.

He smiled, for he thought that he had found favor in the eyes of an Eastern houri, and that flattered him. But he soon lost sight of her in the crowd, and forgot her almost immediately. The next morning, however, a eunuch of the Pasha's came to him, to his no small astonishment, and told him to come with him. He took him to the Sultan's most powerful deputy, who ruled as an absolute despot in Damascus. They went through dark, narrow passages, and curtains were pushed aside, which rustled behind them again. At last they reached a large rotunda, the center of which was occupied by a beautiful fountain, while scarlet divans ran all around it. Here the eunuch told the merchant

to wait, and left him. He was puzzling his brains as to the meaning of it all, when suddenly a tall, commanding woman came into the apartment. Again a pair of large, threatening eyes looked at him through the veil, while he knew from her green, gold-embroidered caftan, that if it was not the Pasha's wife, it was at least one of his favorites who was before him. So he hurriedly knelt down, and crossing his hands on his breast, he put his head on the ground before her. But a clear, diabolical laugh made him look up, and when the beautiful *odalisque* threw back her veil, he uttered a cry of terror, for his wife, his deceived wife, whom he had sold, was standing before him.

"Do you know me?" she asked with quiet dignity.

"Viteska!"

"Yes, that was my name when I was your wife," she replied quickly, in a contemptuous voice; "but now that I am the Pasha's wife, my name is Sarema. I do not suppose you ever expected to find me again, you wretch, when you sold me in Varna to an old Jewish profligate, who was only half alive. You see I have got into better hands, and I have made my fortune, as you said I should do. Well? What do you expect of me; what thanks, what reward?"

The wretched man was lying overwhelmed at the feet of the woman whom he had so shamefully deceived, and could not find a word to say. He felt that he was lost, and had not even got the courage to beg for mercy.

"You deserve death, you miscreant," Sarema continued. "You are in my hands, and I can do whatever I please with you, for the Pasha has left your

punishment to me alone. I ought to have you impaled, and to feast my eyes on your death agonies. That would be the smallest compensation for all the years of degradation that I have been through, and which I owe to you."

"Mercy, Viteska! Mercy!" the wretched man cried, trembling all over, and raising his hands to her in supplication.

The *odalisque's* only reply was a laugh, in which rang all the cruelty of an insulted woman's deceived heart. It seemed to give her pleasure to see the man whom she had loved, and who had so shamefully trafficked in her beauty, in mortal agony, cringing before her, whining for his life, as he grovelled on his knees. At last she seemed to relent somewhat.

"I will give you your life, you miserable wretch," she said, "but you shall not go unpunished." So saying, she clapped her hands, and four black eunuchs came in. They seized the favorite's unfortunate husband and in a moment bound his hands and feet.

"I have altered my mind, and he shall not be put to death," Sarema said, with a smile that made the traitor's blood run cold in his veins. "But give him a hundred blows with the bastinado, and I will stand by and count them."

"For God's sake," the merchant screamed, "I can never endure it."

"We will see about that," the favorite said, coldly; "if you die under it, it was allotted you by fate; I am not going to retract my orders."

She threw herself down on the cushions, and began to smoke a long pipe,

which a female slave handed to her on her knees. At a sign from her the eunuchs tied the wretched man's feet to the pole, by which the soles of the culprit were raised, and began the terrible punishment. Already at the tenth blow the merchant began to roar like a wild animal, but the wife whom he had betrayed remained unmoved, carelessly blowing the blue wreaths of smoke into the air. Resting on her lovely arm, she watched his features, which were distorted by pain, with merciless enjoyment.

During the last blows he only groaned gently, and then he fainted.

* * * * *

A year later the dealer was caught with his female merchandise by the police in an Austrian town and handed over to justice, when he made a full confession. By that means the parents of the "Odalisque of Senichou" heard of their daughter's position. As they knew that she was happy and surrounded by luxury, they made no attempt to get her out of the Pasha's hands, who, like a thorough Mussulman, had become the slave of his slave.

The unfortunate husband was sent over to the frontier when he was released from prison. His shameful traffic, however, flourishes still, in spite of all the precautions of the police and of the consuls. Every year he provides the harems of the East with those voluptuous *Boxclanas*, especially from Bohemia and Hungary, who, in the eyes of a Mussulman, vie with the slender Circassian women for the prize of beauty.

Bric-à-Brac

"IF YOU would like to see the interesting bric-à-brac there, come with me," said my friend, Boisrené.

He then led me to the first story of a beautiful house, in a great street in Paris. We were received by a very strong man, of perfect manners, who took us from piece to piece showing us rare objects of which he mentioned the price carelessly. Great sums, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty thousand francs, came from his lips with so much grace and facility that one could not doubt that millions were shut up in the strong boxes of this merchant man of the world.

I had known him by name for a long time. Very clever, very tactful, very intelligent, he served as intermediary for all sorts of transactions. In touch with all the richest amateurs of Paris, and even of Europe and America, knowing their tastes, their preferences for the moment, he brought them by a word or a dispatch, if they lived in some far-off town, when he knew that some object was to be sold that would please them.

Men in the best of society had had recourse to him in times of embarrassment, perhaps to get money for play, perhaps to pay a debt, perhaps to sell a picture, a family jewel, or a tapestry, or even to sell a horse, where the owner was in close straits.

It was said that he never refused his services when he could foresee any chance of gain.

Boisrené seemed intimate with this curiosity merchant. They had managed more than one affair together. I myself looked at the man with much interest.

He was tall, thin, bald, and very

elegant. His sweet, insinuating voice had a particular charm, a tentative charm, which gives to things a special value. When he held an article in his fingers, he turned it, re-turned it, and looked at it with so much directness, tactfulness, elegance, and sympathy that the object was at once embellished, transformed by his touch and his look. And one would immediately estimate it at a higher cost than before it passed from the show-case to his hand.

"And your Christ, the beautiful Christ of the Renaissance," said Boisrené, "that you showed me last year?"

The man smiled and replied:

"It is sold, and in rather a strange fashion. In fact, the whole story of a Parisian woman is in the sale. Would you like me to tell it to you?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Do you know the Baroness Samoris?"

"Yes and no. I have only seen her once, but I know who she is!"

"You know fully?"

"Yes."

"Are you willing to tell me, that I may see whether you are deceived or not?"

"Very willing. Madame Samoris is a woman of the world who has a daughter without ever having had a husband, as the saying goes. But, if she has not had a husband, she has lovers, after a discreet fashion, so that they are received into certain society which is tolerant or blind. She is constant at Church, receives the sacrament with reflection, after the fashion of one who knows, and never will compromise herself. She hopes her daughter will make a good marriage. Is it not so?"

"Yes, but I will complete your information; she is a kept woman who makes herself respected by her lovers more than if she did not live with them. That is rare merit; for in this way one obtains whatever is desired of a man. The one whom she chooses, without which a man would have doubts, pays court a long time, desires her with fear, solicits with shame, obtains with astonishment, and possesses with consideration. He does not perceive that he pays, so much tact does she use in taking; and she maintains their relation with such a tone of reserve, of dignity, of propriety, that in going away from her he would slap the face of a man capable of suspecting the virtue of his mistress. And that with the best faith in the world.

"I have rendered some services to this woman in many of her undertakings. She has no secrets from me.

"Somewhere in the first days of January, she came to me to borrow thirty thousand francs. I had not the amount at hand, you understand, but as I desired to oblige her, I begged her to tell me her situation fully, that I might see if there was anything I could do for her.

"She told me things in such precautionary language as she might use in relating a most delicate story for her daughter's first communion. I finally understood that times were hard and that she found herself without a sou. The commercial crisis, political disturbances which the government actually seemed to entertain with pleasure, rumors of war, and the general constraint had made money hesitate, even in the hands of lovers. And then, she

could not, this honest woman, give herself to the first comer.

"A man of the world, of the best world, was necessary for her, one who would preserve her reputation while furnishing the daily needs. A rake would compromise her forever, even though he were very rich, and make the marriage of her daughter problematical. She could not think of business arrangements, of dishonoring intermediaries who might be able to relieve her of her embarrassment for a time. She must maintain the standard of her house, continue to receive with open doors, in order not to lose the hope of finding, among her visitors, the discreet and distinguished friend whom she was waiting to choose.

"For my part, I observed to her that there seemed little chance of my thirty thousand francs returning to me, since, when they were eaten up, she would have to obtain sixty thousand at a single blow in order to give me half.

"She was disconsolate while listening to me, and I could think of nothing to be done, when an idea, a truly genial idea, crossed my mind. I had just bought the Christ of the Renaissance which I showed you, an admirable piece, the most beautiful in that style that I have ever seen.

"'My dear friend,' said I to her, 'I am going to make you take this little ivory home with you. You can invent an ingenious story, touching, poetic, whatever you wish, which will explain your desire of parting with it. It can be understood that it is an heirloom of the family, inherited from your father.

"'I will see some amateurs for you and take them there myself. The rest

you will attend to. I will let you understand their situation by a word, a watchword. This piece is worth fifty thousand francs, but I let you have it for thirty thousand. The difference will be yours."

"She reflected some moments with a profound air and then replied:

"'Yes, perhaps it is a good idea. I thank you very much.'

"The next day I sent the Christ of the Renaissance to her house, and that evening I sent to her the Baron Saint-Hospital. For three months I addressed clients to her, clients of the best, who were confident of my judgment in business. But I heard no one speak to her.

"Then, having received a foreign customer who spoke very bad French, I decided to present him myself at the house of Madame Samoris, in order to let him see the piece.

"A footman all in black received us and showed us into a pretty drawing-room, furnished with taste, where we waited some minutes. She appeared, charming, extending her hand to me, making us be seated. When I explained the motive of my visit, she rang.

"The footman reappeared.

"'See if Miss Isabelle can let us enter her chapel,' she said to him.

"The young girl herself brought the response. She was about fifteen, with a good, modest appearance, and all the freshness of youth. She wished to guide us herself into her chapel.

"It was a sort of pious boudoir, where a silver lamp was burning before the Christ of the Renaissance, my property,

couched on a bed of black velvet. The setting of the scene was charming and very clever. The child made the sign of the cross, and then said: 'Look, gentlemen, is it not beautiful?'

"I took the object, examined it, and declared it remarkable. The stranger, also, considered it, but he seemed much more occupied with the women than with the Christ.

"One felt good in their home, felt the incense, the flowers, the perfume. One found complete repose there. It was truly a comfortable dwelling, inviting to rest.

"When we had re-entered the drawing-room, I broached, with reserve and delicacy, the question of price. Madame Samoris asked, lowering her eyes, fifty thousand francs. Then she added:

"'If you wish to see it again, sir, I scarcely ever go out before three o'clock, and you will find me here any day.'

"In the street, the stranger asked me some details about the Baroness, whom he found charming. But I did not undertake to say much for her, nor of her.

"Three months more passed.

"One morning, not more than five days ago, she came to my house at the breakfast hour and, placing a pocket-book in my hand, said: 'My dear, you are an angel. Here are fifty thousand francs! I have bought your Christ of the Renaissance, and I pay twenty thousand francs more than the price agreed upon, on the condition that you will always—always send me clients—because the piece is still for sale.'"

The Artist's Wife

CURVED like a crescent moon, the little town of Étretat, with its white cliffs and its blue sea, is reposing under the sun of a grand July day. At the two points of the crescent are the two gates, the little one at the right, and the large one at the left, as if it were gradually advancing to the water—on one side a dwarfed foot, on the other, a leg of giant proportions; and the spire, nearly as high as the cliff, large at the base and fine at the summit, points its slim head toward the heavens.

Along the beach, upon the float, a crowd is seated watching the bathers. Upon the terrace of the Casino, another crowd, seated or walking, parades under the full light of day, a garden of pretty costumes, shaded by red and blue umbrellas embroidered in great flowers of silk. At the end of the promenade, on the terrace, there are other people, calm, quiet, walking slowly along up and down, as far as possible from the elegant multitude.

A young man, well-known, and celebrated as a painter, John Summer, was walking along with a listless air beside an invalid chair in which reposed a young woman, his wife. A domestic rolled the little carriage along, gently, while the crippled woman looked with sad eyes upon the joy of the heavens, the joy of the day, and the joy of other people.

They were not talking, they were not looking at each other. The woman said: "Let us stop a little."

They stopped, and the painter seated himself upon a folding chair arranged for him by the valet. Those who passed

behind the couple, sitting there mute and motionless, regarded him with pitying looks. A complete legend of devotion had found its way about. He had married her in spite of her infirmity, moved by his love, they said.

Not far from there, two young men were seated on a capstan, chatting and looking off toward the horizon.

"So, it is not true," said one of them, "I tell you I know much of John Summer's life."

"Then why did he marry her? For she was really an invalid at the time, was she not?"

"Just as you see her now. He married her—he married her—as one marries—well, because he was a fool!"

"How is that?"

"How is that? That is how, my friend. That is the whole of it. One is a goose because he is a goose. And then you know, painters make a specialty of ridiculous marriages; they nearly always marry their models, or some old mistress, or some one of the women among the varied assortment they run up against. Why is it? Does anyone know? It would seem, on the contrary, that constant association with this race that we call models would be enough to disgust them forever with that kind of female. Not at all. After having made them pose, they marry them. Read that little book of Alphonse Daudet, 'Artists' Wives,' so true, so cruel, and so beautiful.

"As for the couple you see there, the accident that brought about that marriage was of a unique and terrible kind. The little woman played a comedy, or

rather a frightful drama. In fact, she risked all for all. Was she sincere? Does she really love John? Can one ever know that? Who can determine, with any precision, the real from the make-believe, in the acts of women? They are always sincere in an eternal change of impressions. They are passionate, criminal, devoted, admirable, and ignoble, ready to obey unseizable emotions. They lie without ceasing, without wishing to, without knowing it, without comprehension, and they have with this, in spite of this, an absolute freedom from sensation and sentiment, which they evince in violent resolutions, unexpected, incomprehensible folly, putting to rout all our reason, all our custom of deliberation, and all our combination of egotism. The unforeseen bluntness of their determination makes them, to us, indecipherable enigmas. We are always asking: 'Are they sincere? Are they false?'

"But, my friend, they are sincere and false at the same time, because it is in their nature to be the two extremes and neither the one nor the other. Look at the means the most honest employ for obtaining what they wish. They are both complicated and simple, these means are. So complicated that we never guess them in advance, so simple that after we have been the victims of them, we cannot help being astonished and saying to ourselves: 'My! Did she play me as easily as that?' And they succeed always, my good friend, especially when it is a question of making us marry them.

"But here is John Summer's story:

"The little wife was a model, as the term is usually understood. She posed

for him. She was pretty, particularly elegant, and possessed, it appears, a divine figure. He became her lover, as one becomes the lover of any seductive woman he sees often. He imagines he loves her with his whole soul. It is a singular phenomenon. As soon as one desires a woman, he believes sincerely that he can no longer live without her. They know very well that their time has arrived. They know that disgust always follows possession; that, in order to pass one's existence by the side of another being, not brutal, physical appetite, so quickly extinguished, is the need, but an accordance of soul, of temperament, of humor. In a seduction that one undertakes, in bodily form, it is necessary to mingle a certain sensual intoxication with a charming depth of mind.

"Well, he believed that he loved her; he made her a heap of promises of fidelity and lived completely with her. She was gentle and endowed with that undeniable elegance which the Parisian woman acquires so easily. She tumbled and babbled and said silly things, which seemed *spirituelle*, from the droll way in which she put them. She had each moment some little trick or pretty gesture to charm the eye of the painter. When she raised an arm, or stooped down, her movements were always perfect, exactly as they should be.

"For three months John did not perceive that, in reality, she was like all models. They rented for the summer a little house at Andressy. I was there one evening, when the first disquiet germinated in the mind of my friend.

"As the night was radiant, we wished to take a turn along the bank of the river. The moon threw in the water a

glittering shower of light, crumbling its yellow reflections in the eddy, in the current, in the whole of the large river, flowing slowly along.

"We were going along the bank, a little quiet from the vague exaltation which the dreaminess of the evening threw about us. We were wishing we might accomplish superhuman things, might love some unknown beings, deliciously poetic. Strange ecstasies, desires, and aspirations were trembling in us.

"And we kept silent, penetrated by the serene and living freshness of the charming night, by that freshness of the moon which seems to go through the body, penetrate it, bathe the mind, perfume it and steep in it happiness.

"Suddenly Josephine (she called herself Josephine) cried out:

"'Oh! did you see the great fish that jumped down there?'

"He replied, without looking or knowing: 'Yes, dearie.'

"She was angry. 'No, you have not seen it since your back was turned to it.'

"He laughed. 'Yes, it is true. It is so fine here that I was thinking of nothing.'

"She was silent; but at the end of a minute, the need of speaking seized her, and she asked:

"'Are you going to Paris to-morrow?'

"He answered: 'I don't know.'

"Again she was irritated:

"'Perhaps you think it is amusing to walk out without saying anything,' she said; 'one usually talks if he is not too stupid.'

"He said nothing. Then, knowing well, thanks to her wicked, womanly in-

stinct, that he would be exasperated, she began to sing that irritating air with which our ears and minds had been wearied for the past two years:

"'I was looking in the air.

"He murmured: 'I beg you be quiet.'

"She answered furiously: 'Why should I keep quiet?'

"He replied: 'You will arouse the neighborhood.'

"Then the scene took place, the odious scene, with unexpected reproaches, tempestuous recriminations, then tears. All was over. They went back to the house. He allowed her to go on without reply, calmed by the divine evening and overwhelmed by the whirlwind of foolishness.

"Three months later, he was struggling desperately in the invincible, invisible bonds with which habit enlaces our life. She held him, oppressed him, martyred him. They quarreled from morning until evening, insulting and combating each other.

"Finally, he wished to end it, to break, at any price. He sold all his work, realizing some twenty thousand francs (he was then little known) and, borrowing some money from friends, he left it all on the chimney-piece with a letter of adieu.

"He came to my house as a refuge. Toward three o'clock in the afternoon, the bell rang. I opened the door. A woman jumped into my face, brushed me aside, and rushed into my studio; it was she.

"He stood up on seeing her enter. She threw at his feet the envelope containing the bank-notes, with a truly

noble gesture and said, with short breath:

"Here is your money. I do not care for it."

"She was very pale and trembling, ready, apparently for any folly. He, too, grew pale, pale from anger and vexation, ready, perhaps, for any violence.

"He asked: 'What do you want, then?'"

"She replied: 'I do not wish to be treated like a child. You have implored me and taken me. I ask you for nothing—only protect me.'

"He stamped his foot, saying: 'No, it is too much! And if you believe that you are going—'

"I took hold of his arm. 'Wait, John,' said I, 'let me attend to it.'

"I went toward her, and gently, little by little, I reasoned with her, emptying the sack of arguments that are usually employed in such cases. She listened to me motionless, with eyes fixed, obstinate and dumb. Finally, thinking of nothing more to say, and seeing that the affair would not end pleasantly, I struck one more last note. I said:

"He will always love you, little one, but his family wishes him to marry, and you know—"

"This was a surprise for her! 'Ah!—Ah!—now I comprehend—' she began.

"And turning toward him she continued: 'And so—you are going to marry!'"

"He answered carelessly: 'Yes.'

"Then she took a step forward: 'If you marry, I will kill myself—you understand.'

"Well, then, kill yourself,' he hissed over his shoulder.

"She choked two or three times, her throat seeming bound by a frightful anguish. 'You say—you say— Repeat it!'"

"He repeated: 'Well, kill yourself, if that pleases you!'"

"She replied, very pale with fright: 'It is not necessary to dare me. I will throw myself from that window.'

"He began to laugh, advanced to the window, opened it, bowed like a person allowing some one to precede him, saying:

"Here is the way; after you!'"

"She looked at him a second with fixed eyes, terribly excited; then, taking a leap, as one does in jumping a hedge in the field, she passed before him, before me, leaped over the sill and disappeared.

"I shall never forget the effect that this open window made upon me, after having seen it traversed by that falling body; it appeared to me in a second, great as the sky and as empty as space. And I recoiled instinctively, not daring to look, as if I had fallen myself.

"John, dismayed, made no motion.

"They took up the poor girl with both legs broken. She could never walk again.

"Her lover, foolish with remorse, and perhaps touched by remembrance, took her and married her. There you have it, my dear."

The evening was come. The young woman, being cold, wished to go in; and the domestic began to roll the invalid's little carriage toward the village. The painter walked along beside his wife, without having exchanged a word with her for an hour.

In the Spring

WHEN the first fine spring days come, and the earth awakes and assumes its garment of verdure, when the perfumed warmth of the air caresses your face and fills your lungs, and even seems to reach your heart, you feel vague longings for an undefined happiness, a wish to run, to walk anywhere and everywhere, to inhale the soul of the spring. As the winter had been very severe the year before, this longing assumed an intoxicating feeling in May; it was like a superabundance of sap.

Well, one morning on waking, I saw from my window the blue sky glowing in the sun above the neighboring houses. The canaries hanging in the windows were singing loudly, and so were the servants on every floor; a cheerful noise rose up from the streets, and I went out, with my spirits as bright as the day, to go—I did not exactly know where. Everybody I met seemed to be smiling; an air of happiness appeared to pervade everything in the warm light of returning spring. One might almost have said that a breeze of love was blowing through the city, and the young women whom I saw in the streets in morning toilettes, in the depths of whose eyes there lurked a hidden tenderness, and who walked with languid grace, filled my heart with agitation.

Without knowing how or why, I found myself on the banks of the Seine. Steamboats were starting for Suresnes, and suddenly I was seized by an unconquerable wish for a walk through the wood. The deck of the *mouche** was crowded with passengers, for the sun in early spring draws you out of the

house, in spite of yourself, and everyone is active, visiting and gossiping with the people sitting near.

I had a female neighbor; a little work-girl, no doubt, who possessed the true Parisian charm. Her little head had light curly hair like frizzed light, which came down to her ears and to the nape of her neck, danced in the wind, and then became such fine, such light-colored down, that you could scarcely see it, but on which you felt an irresistible desire to impress a shower of kisses.

Under the magnetism of my looks, she turned her head toward me, and then immediately looked down, while a slight dimpling of the flesh, the forerunner of a smile, also showed that fine, pale down which the sun was gilding a little.

The calm river grew wider; the atmosphere was warm and perfectly still, but a murmur of life seemed to fill all space.

My neighbor raised her eyes again, and, this time, as I was still looking at her, she smiled, decidedly. She was charming, and in her passing glance I saw a thousand things of which I had hitherto been ignorant. I saw in it unknown depths, all the charm of tenderness, all the poetry which we dream of, all the happiness which we are continually in search of. I felt an insane longing to open my arms and to carry her off somewhere, so as to whisper the sweet music of words of love into her ears.

I was just going to speak to her when

*Fly. A name given to the small steamboats on the Seine.

somebody touched me on the shoulder. Turning round in some surprise, I saw an ordinary looking man, who was neither young nor old, and who gazed at me sadly:

"I should like to speak to you," he said.

I made a grimace, which he no doubt saw, for he added:

"It is a matter of importance."

I got up, therefore, and followed him to the other end of the boat, and then he said:

"Monsieur, when winter comes, with its cold, wet, and snowy weather, your doctor says to you constantly: 'Keep your feet warm, guard against chills, colds, bronchitis, rheumatism, and pleurisy.'

"Then you are very careful, you wear flannel, a heavy great-coat, and thick shoes, but all this does not prevent you from passing two months in bed. But when spring returns, with its leaves and flowers, its warm, soft breezes, and its smell of the fields, causing you vague disquiet and causeless emotion, nobody says to you:

"'Monsieur, beware of love! It is lying in ambush everywhere; it is watching for you at every corner; all its snares are laid, all its weapons are sharpened, all its guiles are prepared! Beware of love. Beware of love. It is more dangerous than brandy, bronchitis, or pleurisy! It never forgives, and makes everybody commit irreparable follies.'

"Yes, Monsieur, I say that the French government ought to put large public notices on the walls, with these words: 'Return of spring. French citizens, be-

ware of love'; just as they put: 'Beware of paint.'

"However, as the government will not do this, I must supply its place, and I say to you: 'Beware of love,' for it is just going to seize you, and it is my duty to inform you of it, just as in Russia they inform anyone that his nose is frozen."

I was much astonished at this individual, and assuming a dignified manner, I said:

"Really, Monsieur, you appear to me to be interfering in a matter which is no business of yours."

He made an abrupt movement, and replied:

"Ah, Monsieur, Monsieur! If I see that a man is in danger of being drowned at a dangerous spot, ought I to let him perish? So just listen to my story, and you will see why I ventured to speak to you like this.

"It was about this time last year that it occurred. But, first of all, I must tell you that I am a clerk in the Admiralty, where our chiefs, the commissioners, take their gold lace as quill-driving officers seriously, and treat us like foretop men on board a ship. Well, from my office I could see a small bit of blue sky and the swallows, and I felt inclined to dance among my portfolios.

"My yearning for freedom grew so intense, that, in spite of my repugnance, I went to see my chief, who was a short, bad-tempered man, who was always cross. When I told him that I was not well, he looked at me, and said: 'I do not believe it, Monsieur, but be off with you! Do you think that any office can go on with clerks like you?' I started at once, and went down the Seine. It

was a day like this, and I took the *mouche* to go as far as Saint-Cloud. Ah! What a good thing it would have been if my chief had refused me permission to leave the office for the day!

"I seemed to expand in the sun. I loved it all; the steamer, the river, the trees, the houses, my fellow-passengers, everything. I felt inclined to kiss something, no matter what; it was love laying its snare. Presently, at the Trocadéro, a girl, with a small parcel in her hand, came on board and sat down opposite to me. She was certainly pretty; but it is surprising, Monsieur, how much prettier women seem to us when it is fine, at the beginning of the spring. Then they have an intoxicating charm, something quite peculiar about them. It is just like drinking wine after the cheese.

"I looked at her, and she also looked at me, but only occasionally, like that girl did at you, just now; but at last, by dint of looking at each other constantly, it seemed to me that we knew each other well enough to enter into conversation, and I spoke to her, and she replied. She was decidedly pretty and nice, and she intoxicated me, Monsieur!

"She got out at Saint-Cloud, and I followed her. She went and delivered her parcel, but when she returned, the boat had just started. I walked by her side, and the warmth of the air made us both sigh.

"'It would be very nice in the wood,' I said.

"'Indeed, it would!' she replied.

"'Shall we go there for a walk, Mademoiselle?'

"She gave me a quick, upward look,

as if to see exactly what I was like, and then, after a little hesitation, she accepted my proposal, and soon we were there, walking side by side. Under the foliage, which was still rather thin, the tall, thick, bright, green grass was inundated by the sun and full of small insects making love to one another, and birds were singing in all directions. My companion began to jump and to run, intoxicated by the air and the smell of the country, and I ran and jumped behind her. How stupid we are at times, Monsieur!

"Then she wildly sang a thousand things; opera airs and the song of *Musette!* The song of *Musette!* How poetical it seemed to me, then! I almost cried over it. Ah! Those silly songs make us lose our heads; take my advice, never marry a woman who sings in the country, especially if she sings the song of *Musette!*

"She soon grew tired, and sat down on a grassy slope, and I sat down at her feet. I took her hands, her little hands, so marked with the needle, and they moved me. I said to myself: 'These are the sacred marks of toil.' Oh, Monsieur! do you know what those sacred marks of labor mean? They mean all the gossip of the workroom, the whispered blackguardism, the mind soiled by all the filth that is talked; they mean lost chastity, foolish chatter, all the wretchedness of daily bad habits, all the narrowness of ideas which belongs to women of the lower orders, united in the girl whose sacred fingers bear *the sacred marks of toil.*

"Then we looked into each other's eyes for a long while. What power a woman's eye has! How it agitates us,

how it invades our very being, takes possession of us, and dominates us. How profound it seems, how full of infinite promise! People call that looking into each other's souls! Oh! Monsieur, what humbug! If we could see into each other's souls, we should be more careful of what we did. However, I was caught, and crazy after her, and tried to take her into my arms, but she said: 'Hands off!' Then I threw myself down, and opened my heart to her, and poured out all the affection that was suffocating me, my head on her knees. She seemed surprised at my manner, and gave me a sidelong glance, as if to say: 'Ah! So that is the way women make a fool of you, old fellow! Very well, we will see.' In love, Monsieur, men are the artists, and women are the dealers.

"No doubt I could have won her, and I saw my own stupidity later, but what I wanted was not a woman's person, it was love, it was the ideal. I was sentimental, when I ought to have been using my time to a better purpose.

"As soon as she had had enough of my declarations of affection, she got up, and we returned to Saint-Cloud, but I did not leave her until we got to Paris. But she looked so sad as we were returning, that at last I asked her what was the matter.

"'I am thinking,' she replied, 'that this has been one of those days of which we have but few in life.'

"And my heart beat as if it would break my ribs.

"I saw her on the following Sunday, and the next Sunday, and every Sunday. I took her to Bougival, Saint-

Germain, Maison-Lafitte, Poissy; to every suburban resort of lovers.

"The little jade, in turn, pretended to love me, until, at last, I altogether lost my head, and three months later I married her.

"What can you expect, Monsieur, when a man is a clerk, living alone, without any relations, or anyone to advise him? You say to yourself: 'How sweet life would be with a wife!'

"And so you get married, and she calls you names from morning till night, understands nothing, knows nothing, chatters continually, sings the song of *Musette* at the top of her voice (oh! that song of *Musette*, how tired one gets of it!); quarrels with the charcoal dealer, tells the porter all her domestic details, confides all the secrets of her bedroom to the neighbor's servant, discusses her husband with the tradespeople, and has her head so stuffed with stupid stories, with idiotic superstitions, with extraordinary ideas, and monstrous prejudices, that I—for what I have said, applies particularly to myself—shed tears of discouragement every time I talk to her."

He stopped, as he was rather out of breath, and very much moved. I looked at him, for I felt pity for this poor, artless devil, and I was just going to give him some sort of answer, when the boat stopped. We were at Saint-Cloud.

The little woman who had so taken my fancy got up in order to land. She passed close to me, and gave me a side glance and a furtive smile—one of those smiles that drive you wild; then she jumped on the landing-stage. I sprang forward to follow her, but my

neighbor laid hold of my arm. I shook myself loose, however, whereupon he seized the skirt of my coat, and pulled me back, exclaiming:

"You shall not go! You shall not go!" in such a loud voice, that everybody turned round and laughed. I remained standing motionless and furious,

but without venturing to face scandal and ridicule, and the steamboat started.

The little woman on the landing-stage looked at me as I went off with an air of disappointment, while my persecutor rubbed his hands and whispered to me:

"You must admit that I have done you a great service."

The Real One and the Other

"WELL, really," said Chasseval, standing with his back to the fire, "could any of those respectable shopkeepers and wine-growers have possibly believed that that pretty little Parisian woman, with soft innocent eyes, like those of a Madonna, with smiling lips and golden hair, who always dressed so simply, was their candidate's mistress?"

She was a wonderful help to him, and accompanied him even to the most outlying farms; went to the meetings in the small village *cafés*, had a pleasant and suitable word for everyone, did not recoil at a glass of mulled wine or a grip of the hand, and was always ready to join the *farandole*.* She seemed to be so in love with Eliéane Rulhière, to trust him so entirely, to be so proud of forming half of his life, and of belonging to him, giving him such looks full of pleasure and of hope, and listening to all he said so intently, that voters who might have hesitated allowed themselves by degrees to be talked over and persuaded, and promised their votes to the young doctor whose name they never heard mentioned in the district before.

That electoral campaign had been like a truant's escapade for Jane Dardenne; it was a delightful and unexpected holiday, and as she was an actress at heart, she played her part seriously, and threw herself into her character, enjoying herself more than she had ever enjoyed herself in her most adventurous outings.

And then there came in the pleasure of being taken for a woman of the world, of being flattered, respected, and envied, of getting out of the usual groove for a time, and also the dream that this journey of a few weeks would have this result, that her lover would not separate from her on their return, but would sacrifice the woman whom he no longer loved, and whom he ironically used to call his "Cinderella," to her.

At night, when they had laid aside all pretense, and were alone in their room in the hotel, she coaxed him and flattered him, spurred his ambition on, threw her quivering arms around him,

*A dance in Provence in which the dancers form a chain, and the movements are directed by the leader.

and amid her kisses, whispered those words to him which make a man proud, warm his heart, and give him strength, like a dram of alcohol.

The two between them captured the district, and won the election easily, for in spite of his youth, Eliéane Rulhière was elected by a majority of five thousand. Then, of course, there were more *fêtes* and banquets, at which Jane was present, and where she was received with enthusiastic shouts; there were fireworks, where she was obliged to set light to the first rocket, and balls at which she astonished these worthy people by her affability. And when they left, three little girls dressed in white, as if they were going to be confirmed, came on to the platform and recited some verses complimentary to her, while the band played the "Marseillaise," the women waved their pocket handkerchiefs, and the men their hats; and leaning out of the carriage window, looking charming in her traveling costume, with a smile on her lips and moist eyes, as was fitting at such a pathetic leave-taking, actress as she was, with a sudden and childlike gesture she blew kisses to them from the tips of her fingers, and said:

"Good-bye, my friends, good-bye, only for the present; I shall never forget you!"

The deputy, who was also very effusive, had invited his principal supporters to come and see him in Paris, as there were plenty of excursion trains. They all took him at his word, and Rulhière was obliged to invite them all to dinner.

In order to avoid any possible mishaps, he gave his wife a foretaste of their guests. He told her that they were rather noisy, talkative, and un-

polished, and that they would, no doubt, astonish her by their manners and their accent, but that, as they had great influence, and were excellent men, they deserved a good reception. It was a very useful precaution, for when they came into the drawing-room in their new clothes, beaming with pleasure, and with hair pomatumed as if they had been going to a country wedding, they felt inclined to fall down before the new Madame Rulhière to whom the deputy introduced them, and who seemed to be perfectly at home there.

At first they were embarrassed, felt uncomfortable, and out of place, did not know what to say, and had to seek their words. They buttoned and unbuttoned their gloves, answered her questions at random, and racked their brains to discover the solution of the enigma. Captain Mouredus looked at the fire, with the fixed gaze of a somnambulist; Marius Barbaste scratched his fingers mechanically; while the three others, the factory manager, Casemajel, Roquetton, the lawyer, and Dustugue, the hotel proprietor, looked at Rulhière anxiously.

The lawyer was the first to recover himself. He got up from his armchair laughing heartily, dug the deputy in the ribs with his elbow, and said:

"I understand it all, I understand it; you thought that people do not come to Paris to be bored, eh? Madame is delightful, and I congratulate you, Monsieur."

He gave a wink, and made signs behind his back to his friends, and then the captain had his turn.

"We are not boobies, and that fellow Roquetton is the most knowing of the

lot of us. Ah! Monsieur Rulhière, without any exaggeration, you are the cream of good fellows."

And with a flushed face, and expanding his chest, he said sonorously:

"They certainly turn them out very pretty in your part of the country, my little lady!"

Madame Rulhière, who did not know what to say, had gone to her husband for protection; but she felt much inclined to go to her own room under some pretext or other, in order to escape from her intolerable task. She kept her ground, however, during the whole of dinner, which was a noisy, jovial meal, during which the five electors, with their elbows on the table, and their waistcoats unbuttoned, and half drunk, told coarse stories and swore like troopers. But as the coffee and the liqueurs were served in the smoking-room she took leave of her guests in an impatient voice, and went to her own room with the

hasty step of an escaped prisoner, who is afraid of being retaken.

The electors sat staring after her with gaping mouths, and Mouredus lit a cigar, and said:

"Just listen to me, Monsieur Rulhière; it was very kind of you to invite us here, to your little quiet establishment, but to speak to you frankly, I should not in your place wrong my lawful wife for such a stuck-up piece of goods as this one is."

"The captain is quite right," Roqueton the notary opined; "Madame Rulhière, the lawful Madame Rulhière, is much more amiable and altogether nicer. You are a scoundrel to deceive her: but when may we hope to see her?"

And with a paternal grimace, he added:

"But do not be uneasy, we will all hold our tongues; it would be too sad if she were to find it out."

The Carter's Wench

THE driver, who had jumped from his box, was now walking slowly by the side of his thin horses, waking them up every moment by a cut of the whip or a coarse oath. He pointed to the top of the hill, where the windows of a solitary house, although it was very late and quite dark, were shining like yellow lamps, and said to me:

"One gets good liquor there, Monsieur, and well served, by George!"

His eyes flashed in his thin, sunburned face, which was a deep brickdust color,

and he smacked his lips like a drunkard, at the remembrance of a bottle of prime liquor that he had lately imbibed. Then drawing himself up in his blouse he shivered like an ox, when it is sharply pricked with the goad.

"Yes—well served by a wench who will turn your head for you before you have tilted your elbow and drunk a glass!"

The moon was rising behind the snow-covered mountain peaks, reddening them to blood with its rays, and tingeing

the dark, broken clouds, which whirled and floated about the summits, reminding the traveler of some terrible Medusa's head. The gloomy plains of Capsir, which are traversed by torrents, extensive meadows in which undefined forms were moving about, fields of rye like huge golden tablecovers, and here and there wretched villages and broad sheets of water, into which the stars gazed in melancholy manner, opened out to the view. Damp gusts of wind swept along the road, bringing a strong smell of hay, of resin, and of unknown flowers with them, and erratic masses of rock, which were scattered on the surface like huge boundary stones, presented spectral outlines.

The driver pulled his broad-brimmed felt hat over his eyes, twirled his large mustache, and said in an obsequious voice:

"Does Monsieur wish to stop here? This is the place!"

It was a wretched, wayside public-house, with a reddish slate roof, that looked as if it were suffering from leprosy. Before the door there stood three wagons drawn by mules and loaded with huge stems of trees, which took up nearly the whole of the road. The animals, who were used to halting there, were dozing, and their heavy loads exhaled the smell of a pillaged forest.

Inside, three wagoners, one of whom was an old man, while the other two were young, were sitting in front of the fire, which crackled loudly. There were bottles and glasses on a large round table by their side, and they were singing and laughing boisterously. A woman with large round hips, and with a lace cap pinned on to her hair, in the

Catalan fashion, who looked strong and bold, had a certain amount of gracefulness about her, and a pretty, but untidy head, was urging them to undo the strings of their great leather purses. She replied to their somewhat indelicate jokes in a shrill voice, as she sat on the knee of the youngest and allowed him to kiss her and caress her without any signs of shame.

The coachman pushed open the door like a man who knows that he is at home.

"Good evening, Glaizette, and everybody; there is room for two more, I suppose?"

The wagoners did not speak, but looked at us furtively and angrily, like dogs whose food has been taken from them, and who show their teeth, ready to bite. The girl shrugged her shoulders, and looked into their eyes like some female wild-beast tamer; then she asked us with a strange smile:

"What am I to get you?"

"Two glasses of cognac and the best you have in the cupboard, Glaizette," the coachman replied, rolling a cigarette.

While she was uncorking the bottle I noticed how green her eyeballs were; it was a fascinating, tempting green, like the hue of the great green grasshopper. I saw, too, how small her hands were, which showed that she did not use them much. Her teeth were very white, and her voice, which was rather rough, though cooing, had a cruel, and at the same time a coaxing, sound. I fancied I saw her, as in a vision, reclining triumphantly on a couch, indifferent to the fights which were going on about her, always waiting, longing for him who would prove himself the stronger and

come out victorious. She was, in short, a hospitable dispenser of love, by the side of that difficult, stony road, who opened her arms to poor men, and made them forget everything in the profusion of her kisses. She probably knew secrets which nobody in the world besides herself should know, secrets which her sealed lips would carry away inviolate to the other world. She could never yet have loved, and would never really love, because she was vowed to passing kisses, which are so soon forgotten.

I was anxious to escape from her as soon as possible; to fly from the spell of her pale, green eyes, and her mouth that bestowed caresses from pure charity, to feel her beautiful white hands no longer so near me. So I threw her a piece of gold and made my escape without saying a word, without waiting for any change, and without even wishing her good night, for I felt the caress of her smile, and the disdainful restlessness of her looks.

The carriage started off at a gallop to Formiguères, amid a furious jingling of bells. I could not sleep any more; I wanted to know where that woman came from, but I was ashamed to ask the driver, or to show any interest in such a creature. But when he began to talk, as we were going up another hill, divining my sweet thoughts, he told me all he knew about Glazette. I listened to him with the attention of a child, to whom somebody is telling some wonderful fairy tale.

She came from Fontpédrouze, a muleteers' village, where the men spend their time in drinking and gambling at the inn, when they are not traveling on

the highroads with their mules. The women do all the field work, carry the heaviest loads on their back, and lead a life of pain and misery.

Her father kept an inn, and the girl grew up very happily. She was courted before she was fifteen, and was so coquettish that she was generally found in front of her looking-glass, smiling at her own beauty, arranging her hair, and trying to make herself like a young lady on the *prado*. Now as none of the family knew how to keep a half-penny, but spent more than they earned, resembling cracked jugs, from which the water escapes drop by drop, they found themselves ruined one fine day, just as if they had been at the bottom of a blind alley. So on the Feast of our Lady of Succor, when people go on a pilgrimage to Font Romea, and the villages are consequently deserted, the innkeeper set fire to the house. The crime was discovered through La Glazette, who could not make up her mind to leave the looking-glass with which her room was adorned behind her, and so had carried it off under her petticoat.

The parents were sentenced to many years' imprisonment. Compelled to live the best way she could, the girl became a servant, passed from hand to hand, inherited some property from an old farmer whom she had caught as you catch a thrush on a twig covered with bird-lime, and with the money had built this public-house on the new road which was being built across the Capsir.

"A regular bad one, Monsieur," said the coachman in conclusion, "a vixen such as one does not see now in the worst garrison towns, one who would

open the door to the whole confraternity, yet not at all avaricious, and thoroughly honest."

I interrupted him in spite of myself, as if his words had pained me. I thought of those pale green eyes, those magic eyes, eyes to be dreamed about, which were the color of grasshoppers. I looked for them, and saw them in the

darkness; they danced before me like phosphorescent lights, and I would have given the whole contents of my purse to that man if he would only have been silent and have urged his horses on to full speed, so that their mad gallop might carry me off quickly, quickly and further, continually further from that girl.

The Rendezvous

ALTHOUGH she had her bonnet and jacket on, with a black veil over her face, and another in her pocket, which would be put on over the other as soon as she had got into a cab, she was tapping the top of her little boot with the point of her parasol, and remained sitting in her room, unable to make up her mind to keep this appointment.

And yet how many times within the last two years had she dressed herself thus, when she knew that her husband would be on the Stock Exchange, in order to go to the bachelor chambers of handsome Viscount de Martelet.

The clock behind her was ticking loudly, a book which she had half read was lying open on a little rosewood writing-table, between the windows, and a strong sweet smell of violets from two bunches in Dresden china vases mingled with a vague smell of verbena which came through the half-open door of her dressing-room.

The clock struck three, she rose up from her chair, turned round to look at herself in the glass and smiled. "He is

already waiting for me, and will be getting tired."

Then she left the room, told her footman that she would be back in an hour, at the latest—which was a lie—went downstairs, and ventured into the street on foot.

It was toward the end of May, that delightful time of the year when spring seems to be besieging Paris, flowing over its roofs, invading its houses through their walls, and making the city look gay, shedding brightness over its granite *façades*, the asphalt of its pavements, the stones on its streets, bathing and intoxicating it with new life, like a forest putting on its spring vesture.

Madame Haggan went a few steps to the right, intending, as usual, to go along the Parade Provence, where she would hail a cab. But the soft air, that feeling of summer which penetrates our breasts on some days, now took possession of her so suddenly that she changed her mind and went down the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, without knowing why, but vaguely attracted by a desire to see the trees in the Place de la Trinité.

"He may just wait ten minutes longer for me," she said to herself. And the idea pleased her as she walked slowly through the crowd. She fancied that she saw him growing impatient, looking at the clock, opening the window, listening at the door, sitting down for a few moments, getting up again, not daring to smoke, as she had forbidden him to do so when she was coming to him, and throwing despairing looks at his box of cigarettes.

She walked slowly, interested in what she saw, the shops and the people she met, walking slower and slower, and so little eager to get to her destination, that she only sought for some pretext for stopping. At the end of the street, in the little square, the green lawns attracted her so much that she went in, took a chair, and, sitting down, watched the hands of the clock as they moved.

Just then, the half hour struck, and her heart beat with pleasure when she heard the chimes. She had gained half-an-hour, then it would take her a quarter of an hour to reach the Rue de Miromesnil, and a few minutes more in strolling along—an hour! a whole hour saved from her rendezvous! She would not stop three-quarters of an hour, and that business would be finished once more.

She disliked going there as a patient dislikes going to the dentist. She had an intolerable recollection of all their past meetings, one a week on an average, for the last two years; and the thought that another was to take place immediately made her shiver with misery from head to foot. Not that it was exactly painful, like a visit to the dentist, but it was wearisome, so wearisome,

so complicated, so long, so unpleasant, that anything, even a visit to the dentist, would have seemed preferable to her.

She went on, however, but very slowly, stopping, sitting down, going hither and thither, but she went. Oh! how she would have liked to miss this meeting, but she had left the unhappy Viscount in the lurch, twice running, during the last month, and she did not dare to do it again so soon. Why did she go to see him? Oh! why? Because she had acquired the habit of doing it, and had no reason to give poor Martelet when he wanted to know *the why!* Why had she begun it? Why? She did not know herself, any longer. Had she been in love with him? Very possibly! Not very much, but a little, a long time ago! He was very nice, much sought after, perfectly dressed, most courteous, and after the first glance, he was a perfect lover for a fashionable woman.

He had courted her for three months—the normal period, an honorable strife and sufficient resistance—and then she had consented. What emotion, what nervousness, what terrible, delightful fear, attended that first meeting in his small, ground-floor bachelor rooms, in the Rue de Miromesnil. Her heart? What did her little heart of a woman who had been seduced, vanquished, conquered, feel when she for the first time entered the door of the house which was her nightmare? She really did not know! She had quite forgotten. One remembers a fact, a date, a thing, but one hardly remembers, after the lapse of two years, what an emotion, which soon vanished because it was very slight, was like. But she had certainly not

forgotten, the others, that rosary of meetings, that road to the cross of love and its stations, which were so monotonous, so fatiguing, so similar to each other, that she felt nauseated.

The very cabs were not like the other cabs which you use for ordinary purposes! Certainly, the cabmen guessed. She felt sure of it, by the very way they looked at her, and the eyes of these Paris cabmen are terrible! When you realize that these jehus constantly identify in the Courts of Justice, after a lapse of several years, the faces of criminals whom they have only driven once, in the middle of the night, from some street or other to a railway station, and that they carry daily almost as many passengers as there are hours in the day, and that their memory is good enough for them to declare: "That is the man whom I took up in the Rue des Martyrs, and put down at the Lyons Railways Station, at 12 o'clock at night, on July 10, last year!" Is it not terrible to risk what a young woman risks when she is going to meet her lover, and has to trust her reputation to the first cabman she meets? In two years she had employed at least one hundred or more of them in that drive to the Rue de Miromesnil, reckoning only one a week. They were so many witnesses, who might appear against her at a critical moment.

As soon as she was in the cab, she took another veil, as thick and dark as a domino mask, out of her pocket, and put it on. That hid her face, but what about the rest, her dress, her bonnet, and her parasol? They might be remarked—they might, in fact, have been seen already. Oh! What misery she

endured in this Rue de Miromesnil! She thought she recognized the foot-passengers, the servants, everybody, and almost before the cab had stopped, she jumped out and ran past the porter who was standing outside his lodge. He must know everything, everything!—her address, her name, her husband's profession,—everything, for those porters are the most cunning of policemen! For two years she had intended to bribe him, to give him (to throw at him one day as she passed him) a hundred franc bank-note, but she had never dared to do it. She was frightened. What of? She did not know! Of his calling her back, if he did not understand? Of a scandal? Of a crowd on the stairs? Of being arrested, perhaps? To reach the Viscount's door, she had only to ascend half a flight of stairs, but it seemed to her as high as the tower of Saint Jacques's Church.

As soon as she had reached the vestibule, she felt as if she were caught in a trap. The slightest noise before or behind her nearly made her faint. It was impossible for her to go back, because of that porter who barred her retreat; and if anyone came down at that moment she would not dare to ring at Martelet's door, but would pass it as if she had been going elsewhere! She would have gone up, and up, and up! She would have mounted forty flights of stairs! Then, when everything seemed quiet again down below, she would run down feeling terribly frightened, lest she should not recognize the apartment.

He would be there in a velvet coat lined with silk, very stylish, but rather ridiculous, and for two years he had

never altered his manner of receiving her, not in a single movement! As soon as he had shut the door he used to say: "Let me kiss your hands, my dear, dear friend!" Then he would follow her into the room, where with closed shutters and lighted candles, out of refinement, no doubt, he would kneel down before her and look at her from head to foot with an air of adoration. On the first occasion that had been very nice and very successful; but now it seemed to her as if she saw Monsieur Delaunay acting the last scene of a successful piece for the hundred and twentieth time. He might really change his manner of acting. But no, he never altered his manner of acting, poor fellow. What a good fellow he was, but so commonplace!

And how difficult it was to undress and dress without a lady's maid! Perhaps that was the moment when she began to take a dislike to him. When he said: "Do you want me to help you?" she could have killed him. Certainly there were not many men as awkward as he was, or as uninteresting. Certainly little Baron de Isombal would never have asked her in such a manner: "Do you want me to help you?" He would have helped her, he was so witty, so funny, so active. But there! He was a diplomatist, he had been about in the world, and had roamed everywhere, and, no doubt, had dressed and undressed women arrayed in every possible fashion!

The church clock struck the three-quarters. She looked at the dial, and said: "Oh, how anxious he will be!" and then she quickly left the square. But she had not taken a dozen steps

outside, when she found herself face to face with a gentleman who bowed profoundly to her.

"Why! Is that you, Baron?" she said, in surprise. She had just been thinking of him.

"Yes, madame. And then, after asking how she was, he continued: "Do you know that you are the only one—you will allow me to say of my lady friends, I hope—who has not yet seen my Japanese collection?"

"But, my dear Baron, a lady cannot go to a bachelor's room like this."

"What do you mean? That is a great mistake, when it is a question of seeing a rare collection!"

"At any rate, she cannot go alone."

"And why not? I have received a number of ladies alone, only for the sake of seeing my collection! They come every day. Shall I tell you their names? No—I will not do that, one must be discreet, even when one is not guilty. As a matter of fact, there is nothing improper in going to the house of a well-known seriously minded man who holds a certain position, unless one goes for an improper reason!"

"Well, what you have said is certainly correct, at bottom."

"So you will come and see my collection?"

"When?"

"Well, now, immediately."

"Impossible, I am in a hurry."

"Nonsense, you have been sitting in the square for this last half hour."

"You were watching me?"

"I was looking at you."

"But I am sadly in a hurry."

"I am sure you are not. Confess that you are in no particular hurry."

Madame Haggan began to laugh, and said: "Well, no—not very."

A cab passed close by them, and the little Baron called out: "Cabman!" The vehicle stopped, and opening the door, he said: "Get in, madame."

"But, Baron! No, it is impossible to-day; I really cannot."

"Madame, you are acting very imprudently. Get in! People are beginning to look at us, and you will collect a crowd; they will think I am trying to carry you off, and we shall both be arrested; please get in!"

She got in, frightened and bewildered, and he sat down by her side, saying to the cabman: "Rue de Provence."

But suddenly she exclaimed: "Good heavens! I have forgotten a very important telegram; please drive to the nearest telegraph office first of all."

The cab stopped a little farther on, in

the Rue de Châteaudun, and she said to the Baron: "Would you kindly get me a fifty-centimes telegraph form? I promised my husband to invite Martelet to dinner to-morrow, and had quite forgotten it."

When the Baron returned and gave her the blue telegraph form, she wrote in a pencil:

"My dear friend, I am not at all well. I am suffering terribly from neuralgia, which keeps me in bed. Impossible to go out. Come and dine to-morrow night, so that I may obtain my pardon.

"JEANNE."

She wetted the gum, fastened it carefully, and addressed it to "Viscount de Martelet, 240 Rue de Miromesnil," and then, giving it back to the Baron, she said: "Now, will you be kind enough to throw this in the telegram box?"

Solitude

WE had been dining at the house of a friend, and the dinner had been very gay. After it broke up, one of the party, an old friend, said to me:

"Let us take a stroll in the Champs-Elysées."

I agreed, and we went out, slowly walking up the long promenade, under trees hardly yet covered with leaves. There was hardly a sound, save that confused and constant murmur which Paris makes. A fresh breeze fanned our faces, and a legion of stars were scattered over the black sky like a golden powder.

My companion said to me:

"I do not know why, but I breathe better here at night than anywhere else. It seems to me that my thoughts are enlarged. I have at times, a sort of glimmering in my soul, that makes me believe, for a second, that the divine secret of things is about to be discovered. Then the window is closed, and my vision is ended."

From time to time we saw two shadows glide along the length of the thickets; then we passed a bench, where two people, seated side by side, made but one black spot.

My friend murmured:

"Poor things! They do not inspire me with disgust, but with an immense pity. Among all the mysteries of human life there is one which I have penetrated; our great torment in this existence comes from the fact that we are eternally alone—all our efforts and all our actions are directed toward escaping this solitude. Those two lovers there on the benches in the open air are seeking, as we—as all creatures are seeking, to make their isolation cease, if only for a minute or less. They are living and always will live alone; and we also.

"This is more or less apparent to all of us. For some time I have endured this abominable pain of having understood, of having discovered the frightful solitude in which I live, and I know that nothing can make it cease—nothing. Do you hear? Whatever we may attempt, whatever we may do, whatever may be the misery of our hearts, the appeal of our lips, the clasp of our arms, we are always alone. I have asked you to walk to-night, so that I shall not have to enter my own house, because now I suffer horribly from the solitude of my home. What good does it do me? I speak to you, you listen to me, yet we are both alone, side by side but alone. You understand?

"'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' say the Scriptures. They have the illusion of happiness. They do not feel our solitary misery, they do not wander, as I do, through life, without contact save of elbows, without joy save the egotistic satisfaction of understanding, of seeing, of divining, and of suffering eternally

from the knowledge of our never-ending isolation.

"You think me slightly deranged—do you not? Listen to me. Since I have felt the solitude of my being, it seems to me that I am daily sinking more deeply into a dark vault, whose sides I cannot find, whose end I do not know, and which, perhaps, has no end. I sink without anyone with me, or around me, without any living person making this same gloomy journey. This vault is life. Sometimes I hear noises, voices, cries. I timidly advance toward these confused sounds. But I never know exactly from whom they come; I never meet anybody. I never find another hand in this darkness that surrounds me. Do you understand?

"Some men have occasionally divined this frightful suffering. De Musset has written:

"'Who comes? Who calls me? No one. I am alone. One o'clock strikes. O Solitude! O Misery!'

But with him there is only a passing doubt, and not a definite certainty as with me. He was a poet; he peopled life with fantasies, with dreams. He was never really alone. I—I am alone.

"Gustave Flaubert, one of the great unfortunates of this world, because he was one of the great lights, wrote to a friend this despairing phrase: 'We are all in a desert. Nobody understands anybody.'

"No, nobody understands anybody—whatever one thinks, whatever one says, whatever one attempts. Does the earth know what passes in those stars that are hurled like a spark of fire across the firmament—so far that we perceive only

the splendor of some? Think of the innumerable army of others lost in infinitude—so near to each other that they form perhaps a whole, as the molecules of a body!

“Well, man does not know what passes in another man any more. We are farther from one another than the stars, and far more isolated, because thought is unfathomable.

“Do you know anything more frightful than this constant contact with beings that we cannot penetrate? We love one another as if we were fettered, very close, with extended arms, without succeeding in reaching one another. A torturing need of union hampers us, but all our efforts remain barren, our abandonment useless, our confidences unfruitful, our embraces powerless, our caresses vain. When we wish to join each other, our sudden emotions make us only clash against each other.

“I never feel myself more alone than when I open my heart to some friend, because I then better understand the insuperable obstacle. He is there, my friend; I see his clear eyes above me, but the soul behind them I do not see. He listens to me. What is he thinking? Yes, what *is* he thinking? You do not understand this torment! He hates me, perhaps,—or scorns me,—or mocks me! He reflects upon what I have said; he judges me, he rails at me, he condemns me, and considers me either very mediocre or a fool.

“How am I to know what he thinks? How am I to know whether he loves me as I love him, and what is at work in that little round head? What a mystery is the unknown thought of a being, the hidden and independent

thought, that we can neither know nor control, neither command nor conquer!

“And I! I have wished in vain to give myself up entirely; to open all the doors of my soul, and I do not succeed in giving myself up. I still remain in the depth, the very depth, the secret abode of me, where no one can penetrate. No one can discover it, or enter there, because no one resembles me, because no one understands anyone.

“You, at least, understand me at this moment; no: you think I am mad! You examine me; you shrink from me! You ask yourself: ‘What’s the matter with him to-night?’ But if you succeed in seizing, in divining, one day, my horrible and subtle suffering, come to me and say only: ‘I have understood you!’ and you will make me happy, for a second, perhaps.

“Women make me still more conscious of my solitude. Misery! Misery! How I have suffered through women; because they, more than men, have often given me the illusion of not being alone!

“When one falls in love it seems as though one expands. A superhuman felicity envelops you! Do you know why? Do you know why you feel then this sensation of exceeding happiness? It is simply because one imagines himself no longer alone. Isolation, the abandonment of the human being seems to cease. What an error!

“More tormented even than we, by this eternal need of love which gnaws at our solitary heart, are women, the great delusion and the dream.

“You know those delicious hours passed face to face with a being with long hair, charming features, and a look

that excited us to love. What delirium misleads our mind! What illusion carries us away! Does it not seem that presently our souls shall form but one? But this 'presently' never comes; and, after weeks of waiting, of hope, and of deceptive joy, you find yourself again, one day, more alone than you have ever been before.

"After each kiss, after each embrace, the isolation is increased. And how frightfully one suffers!

"Has not Sully Prudhomme written:

"Caresses are only restless transports,
Fruitless attempts of poor love which
essay
The impossible union of souls by the
bodies.'

"And then—good-bye. It is over. One hardly recognizes the woman who has been everything to us for a moment of life, and whose thoughts, intimate and commonplace, undoubtedly, we have never known.

"At the very hour when it would seem, in that mysterious accord of beings, in the complete intermingling of ideas and of aspirations, that you were sounding the very depth of her soul, one word—one word only, sometimes—will reveal your error, will show you, like a flash of lightning in the night, the black abyss between you.

"And still, that which is best in the world is to pass a night near a woman you love, without speaking, completely

happy in the sole sensation of her presence. Ask no more, for two beings have never yet been united.

"As to myself, now, I have closed my soul. I tell no more to anybody what I believe, what I think, or what I love. Knowing myself condemned to this horrible solitude, I look upon things without expressing my opinion. What matter to me opinions, quarrels, pleasures, or beliefs! Being unable to participate with anyone, I have withdrawn myself from all. My invisible self lives unexplored. I have common phrases for answers to the questions of each day, and a smile which says 'Yes,' when I do not even wish to take the trouble of speaking. Do you understand?"

We had traversed the long avenue to the Arc de Triomphe, and had then walked back to the Place de la Concorde, for he had said all this slowly, adding many other things which I no longer remember.

He stopped, and stretching his arm toward the great granite obelisk standing on the pavement of Paris, losing its long Egyptian profile in the night of the stars—an exiled monument, bearing on its side the history of its country written in strange signs—said brusquely: "Look—we are all like that stone."

Then he left me without adding a word. Was he intoxicated? Was he mad? Was he wise? I do not yet know. Sometimes it seems to me that he was right; sometimes it seems to me that he had lost his mind.



The Man with the Blue Eyes

MONSIEUR PIERRE AGÉNOR DE VARGNES, the Examining Magistrate, was the exact opposite of a practical joker. He was dignity, staidness, correctness personified. As a sedate man, he was quite incapable of being guilty, even in his dreams, of anything resembling a practical joke, however remotely. I know nobody to whom he could be compared, unless it be the present president* of the French Republic. I think it is useless to carry the analogy any further, and having said thus much, it will be easily understood that a cold shiver passed through me when I heard the following:

At about eight o'clock, one morning last winter, as he was leaving the house to go to the Palais de Justice, his footman handed him a card, on which was printed:

DOCTOR JAMES FERDINAND,
Member of the Academy of Medicine,
PORT-AU-PRINCE,
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

At the bottom of the card, there was written in pencil: "From Lady Frogère."

Monsieur de Vargnes knew the lady very well. She was a very agreeable Creole from Haïti, whom he had met in many drawing-rooms, and, on the other hand, though the doctor's name did not awaken any recollections in him, his quality and titles alone demanded the courtesy of an interview, however short it might be. Therefore, although he was in a hurry to get out, Monsieur de Vargnes told the footman to show in his early visitor, but to tell him beforehand that his master was

much pressed for time, as he had to go to the Law Courts.

When the doctor came in, in spite of his usual imperturbability, the magistrate could not restrain a movement of surprise, for the doctor presented the strange anomaly of being a negro of the purest, blackest type, with the eyes of a white man—of a man from the North—pale, cold, clear, blue eyes. His surprise increased, when, after a few words of excuse for an untimely visit, the doctor added, with an enigmatical smile:

"My eyes surprise you, do they not? I was sure that they would, and, to tell you the truth, I came here in order that you might look at them well, and never forget them."

His smile, and his words, even more than his smile, seemed to be those of a madman. He spoke very softly, with that childish, lisping voice which is peculiar to negroes, and his mysterious, almost menacing, words consequently sounded all the more as if they were uttered at random by a man bereft of reason. But the doctor's looks, the looks of those pale, cold, clear, blue eyes, were certainly not those of a madman. They clearly expressed menace, yes, menace, as well as irony, and above all, implacable ferocity, and their glance was like a flash of lightning, which one could never forget.

"I have seen," Monsieur de Vargnes used to say, when speaking about it, "the looks of many murderers, but in none of them have I ever observed

*Jules Grévy.

such a depth of crime, and of impudent security in crime."

And this impression was so strong that Monsieur de Vargnes thought he was the victim of some hallucination, especially as when he spoke about his eyes, the doctor continued with a smile, and in his most childish accents:

"Of course, Monsieur, you cannot understand what I am saying to you, and I must beg your pardon for it. To-morrow you will receive a letter which will explain it all to you, but, first of all, it was necessary that I should let you have a good, a careful look at my eyes, my eyes, which are myself, my only and true self, as you will see."

With these words, and with a polite bow, the doctor went out, leaving Monsieur de Vargnes extremely surprised, and a prey to doubt. He said to himself: "Is he merely a madman? The fierce expression and the criminal depths of his looks are perhaps caused merely by the extraordinary contrast between his fierce looks and his pale eyes."

And absorbed in these thoughts, Monsieur de Vargnes unfortunately allowed several minutes to elapse. Then he thought to himself suddenly:

"No, I am not the sport of any hallucination, and this is no case of an optical phenomenon. This man is evidently some terrible criminal, and I have altogether failed in my duty in not arresting him myself at once, illegally, even at the risk of my life."

The judge ran downstairs in pursuit of the doctor, but it was too late; he had disappeared. In the afternoon, he called on Madame de Frogère, to ask her whether she could tell him anything

about the matter. She, however, did not know the negro doctor in the least, and was even able to assure him that he was a fictitious personage, for, as she was well acquainted with the upper classes in Haiti, she knew that the Academy of Medicine at Port-au-Prince had no doctor of that name among its members. As Monsieur de Vargnes persisted, and gave descriptions of the doctor, especially mentioning his extraordinary eyes Madame de Frogère began to laugh, and said:

"You have certainly had to do with a hoaxer, my dear Monsieur. The eyes which you have described are certainly those of a white man, and the individual must have been painted."

On thinking it over, Monsieur de Vargnes remembered that the doctor had nothing of the negro about him but his black skin, his woolly hair and beard, and his way of speaking, which was easily imitated. He had not the characteristic, undulating walk. Perhaps, after all, he was only a practical joker, and during the whole day, Monsieur de Vargnes took refuge in that view, which rather wounded his dignity as a man of consequence, but appeased his scruples as a magistrate.

The next day, he received the promised letter, which was written, as well as addressed, in characters cut out of the newspapers. It was as follows:

"MONSIEUR:

"Doctor James Ferdinand does not exist, but the man whose eyes you saw does, and you will certainly recognize his eyes. This man has committed two crimes, for which he does not feel any remorse, but, as he is a psychologist, he is afraid of some day yielding to the irresistible temptation of confessing his

crimes. You know better than anyone (and that is your most powerful aid), with what imperious force criminals, especially intellectual ones, feel this temptation. That great poet, Edgar Allan Poe, has written masterpieces on this subject, which express the truth exactly, but he has omitted to mention the last phenomenon, which I will tell you. Yes, I, a criminal, feel a terrible wish for somebody to know of my crimes, and when this requirement is satisfied, when my secret has been revealed to a confidant, I shall be tranquil for the future, and be freed from this demon of perversity, which only tempts us once. Well! Now that is accomplished. You shall have my secret: from the day that you recognize me by my eyes, you will try and find out what I am guilty of, and how I was guilty, and you will discover it, being a master of your profession, which, by-the-by, has procured you the honor of having been chosen by me to bear the weight of this secret, which now is shared by us, and by us two alone. I say, advisedly, *by us two alone*. You could not, as a matter of fact, prove the reality of this secret to anyone, unless I were to confess it, and I defy you to obtain my public confession, as I have confessed it to you, *and without danger to myself.*"

Three months later, Monsieur de Vargnes met Monsieur X — at an evening party, and at first sight, and without the slightest hesitation, he recognized in him those very pale, very cold, and very clear blue eyes, eyes which it was impossible to forget.

The man himself remained perfectly impassive, so that Monsieur de Vargnes was forced to say to himself:

"Probably I am the sport of an hallucination at this moment, or else there are two pairs of eyes that are perfectly similar, in the world. And what eyes! Can it be possible?"

The magistrate instituted inquiries

into his life, and he discovered this, which removed all his doubts.

Five years previously, Monsieur X—— had been a very poor but very brilliant medical student, who, although he never took his doctor's degree, had already made himself remarkable by his microbiological researches.

A young and very rich widow had fallen in love with him and married him. She had one child by her first marriage, and in the space of six months, first the child and then the mother died of typhoid fever. Thus Monsieur X—— had inherited a large fortune, in due form, and without any possible dispute. Everybody said that he had attended to the two patients with the utmost devotion. Now, were these two deaths the two crimes mentioned in his letter?

But then, Monsieur X—— must have poisoned his two victims with the microbes of typhoid fever, which he had skillfully cultivated in them, so as to make the disease incurable, even by the most devoted care and attention. Why not?

"Do you really believe it?" I asked Monsieur de Vargnes.

"Absolutely," he replied. "And the most terrible thing about it is that the villain is right when he defies me to force him to confess his crime publicly, for I see no means of obtaining a confession, none whatever. For a moment I thought of magnetism, but who could magnetize that man with those pale, cold, bright eyes? With such eyes, he would force the magnetizer to denounce himself as the culprit."

And then he said, with a deep sigh:

"Ah! Formerly there was something good about justice!"

When he saw my inquiring looks, he added in a firm and perfectly convinced voice:

"Formerly, justice had torture at its command."

"Upon my word," I replied, with all an author's unconscious and simple egotism, "it is quite certain that without the torture, this strange tale will have no conclusion, and that is very unfortunate, so far as regards the story I intended to make out of it."

An Artifice

THE old doctor and his young patient were talking by the side of the fire. There was nothing really the matter with her, except that she had one of those little feminine ailments from which pretty women frequently suffer—slight *anaemia*, nervous attack, and a suspicion of fatigue, probably of that fatigue from which newly-married people often suffer at the end of the first month of their married life, when they have made a love match.

She was lying on the couch and talking, "No, doctor," she said; "I shall never be able to understand a woman deceiving her husband. Even allowing that she does not love him, that she pays no heed to her vows and promises, how can she give herself to another man? How can she conceal the intrigue from other people's eyes? How can it be possible to love amid lies and treason?"

The doctor smiled, and replied: "It is perfectly easy, and I can assure you that a woman does not think of all those little subtle details, when she has made up her mind to go astray. I even feel certain that no woman is ripe for true love until she has passed through all the promiscuousness and all the irksome-

ness of married life, which, according to an illustrious man, is nothing but an exchange of ill-tempered words by day and perfunctory caresses at night. Nothing is more true, for no woman can love passionately until after she has married.

"As for dissimulation, all women have plenty of it on hand on such occasions. The simplest of them are wonderful tacticians, and extricate themselves from the greatest dilemmas in an extraordinary way."

The young woman, however, seemed incredulous. "No, doctor," she said; "one never thinks, until after it has happened, of what one ought to have done in a dangerous affair, and women are certainly more liable than men to lose their head on such occasions."

The doctor raised his hands: "After it has happened, you say! Now I will tell you something that happened to one of my female patients, whom I always considered an immaculate woman.

"It happened in a provincial town. One night when I was sleeping profoundly, in that deep, first sleep from which it is so difficult to rouse yourself, it seemed to me in my dreams as

if the bells in the town were sounding a fire alarm and I woke up with a start. It was my own bell which was ringing wildly, and as my footman did not seem to be answering the door, I in turn pulled the bell at the head of my bed. Soon I heard banging and steps in the silent house, and then Jean came into my room and handed me a letter which said: 'Madame Lelièvre begs Dr. Siméon to come to her immediately.'

"I thought for a few moments, and then I said to myself: 'A nervous attack, vapors, nonsense; I am too tired.' And so I replied: 'As Doctor Siméon is not at all well, he must beg Madame Lelièvre to be kind enough to call in his colleague, Monsieur Bonnet.'

"I put the note into an envelope, and went to sleep again, but about half an hour later, the street bell rang again, and Jean came to me and said: 'There is somebody downstairs—I do not quite know whether it is a man or a woman, as the individual is so wrapped up—who wishes to speak to you immediately. He says it is a matter of life and death for two people. Whereupon, I sat up in bed and told him to show the person in.

"A kind of black phantom appeared, who raised her veil as soon as Jean had left the room. It was Madame Bertha Lelièvre, quite a young woman, who had been married for three years to a large shopkeeper in the town, and was said to have been the prettiest girl in the neighborhood.

"She was terribly pale, her face was contracted like the faces of mad people are, occasionally, and her hands trembled violently. Twice she tried to speak without being able to utter a

sound, but at last she stammered out:

"'Come — quick — quick, doctor—Come—my—my lover has just died in my bedroom.' She stopped, half suffocated with emotion, and then went on: 'My husband will—be coming home from the club very soon.'

"I jumped out of bed, without even considering that I was only in my night-shirt, and dressed myself in a few moments. Then I said: 'Did you come a short time ago?'

"'No,' she said, standing like a statue petrified with horror. 'It was my servant—she knows.' And then, after a short silence, she went on: 'I was there—by his side.' And she uttered a sort of cry of horror, and after a fit of choking, which made her gasp, she wept violently, shaking with spasmodic sobs for a minute or two. Then her tears suddenly ceased, as if dried by an internal fire, and with an air of tragic calmness, she said: 'Let us make haste.'

"I was ready, but I exclaimed: 'I quite forgot to order my carriage.'

"'I have one,' she said; 'it is his, which was waiting for him!' She wrapped herself up, so as to completely conceal her face, and we started.

"When she was by my side in the darkness of the carriage, she suddenly seized my hand, and crushing it in her delicate fingers she said, with a shaking voice, that proceeded from a distracted heart: 'Oh! If you only knew, if you only knew what I am suffering! I loved him, I have loved him distractedly, like a mad woman, for the last six months.'

"'Is anyone up in your house?' I asked.

"'No, nobody except Rose, who knows everything.'

"We stopped at the door. Evidently everybody was asleep, and we went in without making any noise, by means of her latchkey, and walked upstairs on tiptoe. The frightened servant was sitting on the top of the stairs, with a lighted candle by her side, as she was afraid to stop by the dead man. I went into the room, which was turned upside down, as if there had been a struggle in it. The bed, which was tumbled and open, seemed to be waiting for somebody; one of the sheets was thrown on to the floor, and wet napkins, with which they had bathed the young man's temples, were lying by the side of a wash-hand basin and a glass, while a strong smell of vinegar pervaded the room.

"The dead man's body was lying at full length in the middle of the room, and I went up to it, looked at it, and touched it. I opened the eyes, and felt the hands, and then, turning to the two women, who were shaking as if they were frozen, I said to them: 'Help me to lift him on to the bed.' When we had laid him gently on to it, I listened to his heart, put a looking-glass to his lips, and then said: 'It is all over; let us make haste and dress him.' It was a terrible sight!

"I took his limbs one by one, as if they had belonged to some enormous doll, and held them out to the clothes which the women brought, and they put on his socks, drawers, trousers, waistcoat, and lastly the coat; but it was a difficult matter to get the arms into the sleeves.

"When it came to buttoning his boots the two women kneeled down, while I held the light. As his feet were rather

swollen, it was very difficult, and as they could not find a button hook, they had to use their hairpins. When the terrible toilette was over, I looked at our work and said: 'You ought to arrange his hair a little.' The girl went and brought her mistress's large-toothed comb and brush, but as she was trembling, and pulling out his long, tangled hair in doing it, Madame Lelièvre took the comb out of her hand, and arranged his hair as if she were caressing him. She parted it, brushed his beard, rolled his mustaches gently round her fingers, as she had no doubt been in the habit of doing, in the familiarities of their intrigue.

"Suddenly, however, letting go of his hair, she took her dead lover's inert head in her hands, and looked for a long time in despair at the dead face, which no longer could smile at her. Then, throwing herself on to him, she took him into her arms and kissed him ardently. Her kisses fell like blows on to his closed mouth and eyes, on to his forehead and temples, and then, putting her lips to his ear, as if he could still hear her, and as if she were about to whisper something to him, to make their embraces still more ardent, she said several times, in a heartrending voice: 'Adieu, my darling!'

"Just then the clock struck twelve, and I started up. 'Twelve o'clock!' I exclaimed. 'That is the time when the club closes. Come, Madame, we have not a moment to lose!'

"She started up, and I said: 'We must carry him into the drawing-room.' When we had done this, I placed him on a sofa, and lit the chandeliers, and just then the front door was opened and shut

noisily. The husband had come back, and I said: 'Rose, bring me the basin and the towels, and make the room look tidy. Make haste, for heaven's sake! Monsieur Lelièvre is coming in.'

"I heard his steps on the stairs, and then his hands feeling along the walls. 'Come here, my dear fellow,' I said; 'we have had an accident.'

"And the astonished husband appeared in the door with a cigar in his mouth, and said: 'What is the matter? What is the meaning of this?'

"'My dear friend,' I said, going up to him; 'you find us in great embarrassment. I had remained late, chatting with your wife and our friend, who had brought me in his carriage, when he suddenly fainted, and in spite of all we have done, he has remained unconscious for two hours. I did not like to call in strangers, and if you will now help me downstairs with him, I shall be able to attend to him better at his own house.'

"The husband, who was surprised, but quite unsuspecting, took off his hat. Then he took his rival, who would be quite inoffensive for the future, under the arms. I got between his two legs, as if I had been a horse between the shafts, and we went downstairs, while his wife lighted us. When we got outside, I held the body up, so as to deceive the coachman, and said: 'Come,

my friend; it is nothing; you feel better already, I expect. Pluck up your courage, and make an attempt. It will soon be over.' But as I felt that he was slipping out of my hands, I gave him a slap on the shoulder, which sent him forward and made him fall into the carriage; then I got in after him.

"Monsieur Lelièvre, who was rather alarmed, said to me: 'Do you think it is anything serious?' To which I replied, 'No,' with a smile, as I looked at his wife, who had put her arm into that of her legitimate husband, and was trying to see into the carriage.

"I shook hands with them, and told my coachman to start, and during the whole drive the dead man kept falling against me. When we got to his house, I said that he had become unconscious on the way home, and helped to carry him upstairs, where I certified that he was dead, and acted another comedy to his distracted family. At last I got back to bed, not without swearing at lovers."

The doctor ceased, though he was still smiling, and the young woman, who was in a very nervous state, said: "Why have you told me that terrible story?"

He gave her a gallant bow, and replied:

"So that I may offer you my services, if necessary."

The Specter

IN SPEAKING of a recent lawsuit, our conversation had turned on sequestration, and each of us, thereupon, had a

story to tell—a story affirmed to be true. We were a party of intimate friends, who had passed a pleasant eve-

ning, now drawing to a close, in an old family residence in the Rue de Grenelle. The aged Marquis de la Tour-Samuel, bowed 'neath the weight of eighty-two winters, at last rose, and leaning on the mantelpiece, said, in somewhat trembling tones:

"I also know something strange, so strange that it has been a haunting memory all my life. It is now fifty-six years since the incident occurred, and yet not a month has passed in which I have not seen it again in a dream, so great was and is the impression of fear it left on my mind. For ten minutes I experienced such horrible fright that, ever since, a sort of constant terror has made me tremble at unexpected noises, and objects half-seen in the gloom of night inspire me with a mad desire to take flight. In short, I am afraid of the dark!

"Ah, no! I would not have avowed that before having reached my present age! Now I can say anything. I have never receded before real danger. So at eighty-two years of age, I do not feel compelled to be brave over an imaginary danger.

"The affair upset me so completely, and caused me such lasting and mysterious uneasiness, that I never spoke of it to anyone. I will now tell it to you exactly as it happened, without any attempt at explanation.

"In July, 1827, I was in garrison at Rouen. One day, as I was walking on the quay, I met a man whom I thought I recognized, without being able to recall exactly who he was. Instinctively, I made a movement to stop; the stranger perceived it and at once extended his hand.

"He was a friend to whom I had been deeply attached as a youth. For five years I had not seen him, and he seemed to have aged half a century. His hair was quite white, and he walked with a stoop as though completely worn out. He apparently comprehended my surprise, for he told me of the misfortune which had shattered his life.

"Having fallen madly in love with a young girl he had married her, but, after a year of more than earthly happiness, she died suddenly of heart failure. He had left his château on the very day of her burial and had come to live at Rouen. There he still dwelt, more dead than alive, desperate and solitary, exhausted by grief, and so miserable that he thought constantly of suicide.

"'Now that I have found you again,' said he, 'I will ask you to render me an important service. It is to go to my old home and get for me, from the desk of my bedroom—our bedroom—some papers which I greatly need. I cannot send a servant or an agent, as discretion and absolute silence are necessary. As for myself, nothing on earth would induce me to re-enter that house. I will give you the key of the room, which I myself locked on leaving, and the key of my desk—also a note to my gardener, telling him to open the château for you. But come and breakfast with me to-morrow, and we will arrange all that.'

"I promised to do him the slight favor he asked. For that matter, it was nothing of a trip, his property being but a few miles distant from Rouen and easily reached in an hour on horseback.

"At ten o'clock the following day I

breakfasted, *tête-à-tête*, with my friend, but he scarcely spoke.

"He begged me to pardon him; the thought of the visit I was about to make to that room, the scene of his dead happiness, overwhelmed him, he said. He, indeed, seemed singularly agitated and preoccupied, as though undergoing some mysterious mental combat.

"At length he explained to me exactly what I had to do. It was very simple. I must take two packages of letters and a roll of papers from the first drawer on the right of the desk of which I had the key. He added, 'I need not beg you to refrain from glancing at them.'

"I was wounded at that remark, and told him so somewhat sharply. He stammered, 'Forgive me, I suffer so,' and tears came to his eyes.

"At about one o'clock I took leave of him to accomplish my mission.

"The weather was glorious, and I cantered over the turf, listening to the songs of the larks and the rhythmical striking of my sword against my boot. Then I entered the forest and walked my horse. Branches of the trees caressed my face as I passed, and, now and then, I caught a leaf with my teeth, from sheer gladness of heart at being alive and strong on such a radiant day.

"As I approached the château, I took from my pocket the letter I had for the gardener, and was astonished at finding it sealed. I was so irritated that I was about to turn back without having fulfilled my promise, but reflected that I should thereby display undue susceptibility. My friend's state of mind might easily have caused him to close the envelope without noticing that he did so

"The manor seemed to have been abandoned for twenty years. The open gate was dropping from its hinges; the walks were overgrown with grass, and the flower-beds were no longer distinguishable.

"The noise I made by tapping loudly on a shutter brought an old man from out a door near by, who seemed stunned with astonishment at seeing me. On receiving my letter, he read it, reread it, turned it over and over, looked me up and down, put the paper in his pocket, and finally asked:

"'Well! what is it you wish?'

"I replied shortly: 'You ought to know, since you have just read your master's orders. I wish to enter the château.'

"He seemed overcome. 'Then you are going in—in her room?'

"I began to lose patience and said sharply: 'Of course; but is that your affair?'

"He stammered in confusion: 'No—sir—but it is because—that is, it has not been opened since—since the—death. If you will be kind enough to wait five minutes, I will go to—to see if—'

"I interrupted him, angrily: 'Look here, what do you mean with your tricks? You know very well you cannot enter the room, since I have the key!'

"He no longer objected. 'Then, sir, I will show you the way.'

"'Show me the staircase and leave me. I'll find my way without you.'

"'But—sir—indeed—'

"This time I silenced him effectually, pushed him aside, and went into the house.

"I first traversed the kitchen; then two rooms occupied by the servant and his wife; next, by a wide hall, I reached the stairs, which I mounted, and recognized the door indicated by my friend.

"I easily opened it and entered. The apartment was so dark that, at first, I could distinguish nothing. I stopped short, my nostrils penetrated by the disagreeable, moldy odor of long-unoccupied rooms. Then, as my eyes slowly became accustomed to the darkness, I saw plainly enough, a large and disordered bedroom, the bed without sheets, but still retaining its mattresses and pillows, on one of which was a deep impression, as though an elbow or a head had recently rested there.

"The chairs all seemed out of place. I noticed that a door, doubtless that of a closet, had remained half open.

"I first went to the window, which I opened to let in the light; but the fastenings of the shutters had grown so rusty that I could not move them. I even tried to break them with my sword, but without success. As I was growing irritated over my useless efforts, and could now see fairly well in the semi-obscurity, I renounced the idea of getting more light and went over to the writing-table.

"Seating myself in an armchair and letting down the lid of the desk, I opened the designated drawer. It was full to the top. I needed but three packages, which I knew how to recognize, and began searching for them.

"I was straining my eyes in the effort to read the superscriptions, when I seemed to hear, or rather feel, something rustle back of me. I paid no attention, believing that a draught from

the window was moving some drapery. But, in a minute or so, another movement, almost imperceptible, sent a strangely disagreeable little shiver over my skin. It was so stupid to be affected, even slightly, that self-respect prevented my turning around. I had then found the second packet I needed and was about to lay my hand on the third when a long and painful sigh, uttered just over my shoulder, made me bound like a madman from my seat and land several feet away. As I jumped I had turned about, my hand on the hilt of my sword, and, truly, had I not felt it at my side, I should have taken to my heels like a coward.

"A tall woman, dressed in white, stood gazing at me from the back of the chair where I had been sitting an instant before.

"Such a shudder ran through all my limbs that I nearly fell backward. No one can understand unless he has felt it, that frightful, unreasoning terror! The mind becomes vague; the heart ceases to beat; the entire body grows as limp as a sponge.

"I do not believe in ghosts, nevertheless I completely gave way to a hideous fear of the dead; and I suffered more in those few moments than in all the rest of my life, from the irresistible anguish of supernatural fright. If she had not spoken, I should have died, perhaps! But she spoke, she spoke in a sweet, sad voice, that set my nerves vibrating. I dare not say that I became master of myself and recovered my reason. No! I was so frightened that I scarcely knew what I was doing; but a certain innate pride, a remnant of soldierly instinct, made me, almost in spite-

of myself, maintain a creditable countenance.

"She said: 'Oh! sir, you can render me a great service.'

"I wanted to reply, but it was impossible for me to pronounce a word. Only a vague sound came from my throat.

"She continued: 'Will you? You can save me, cure me. I suffer frightfully. I suffer, oh! how I suffer!' and she slowly seated herself in the armchair, still looking at me.

"'Will you?' she said.

"I replied 'Yes' by a nod, my voice still being paralyzed.

"Then she held out to me a tortoise-shell comb, and murmured:

"'Comb my hair, oh! comb my hair; that will cure me; it must be combed. Look at my head—how I suffer; and my hair pulls so!'

"Her hair, unbound, very long and very black, it seemed to me, hung over the back of the chair and touched the floor.

"Why did I receive that comb with a shudder, and why did I take in my hands the long, black hair which gave to my skin a gruesomely cold sensation, as though I were handling snakes? I cannot tell.

"That sensation has remained in my fingers and I still tremble when I think of it.

"I combed her hair. I handled, I know not how, those icy locks. I twisted, knotted, and plaited, and braided them. She sighed and bowed her head, seeming to be happy. Suddenly she said: 'Thank you!' snatched the comb from my hands, and fled by the door that I had noticed ajar.

"Left alone, I experienced for several seconds the horrible agitation of one who awakens from a nightmare. At length I regained my full senses; I ran to the window, and with a mighty effort burst open the shutters, letting a flood of light into the room. Immediately I sprang to the door by which she had departed. I found it closed and immovable!

"Then a mad desire to flee came on me like a panic, the panic which soldiers know in battle. I seized the three packets of letters on the open secretary; ran from the room, dashed down the stairs, found myself outside, I know not how, and seeing my horse a few steps off, leaped into the saddle and galloped away.

"I stopped only when I reached Rouen and my lodgings. There I shut myself into my room to reflect. For an hour I anxiously strove to convince myself that I had been the victim of a hallucination. I was about ready to believe that all I had seen was a vision, an error of my senses, when, as I approached the window, my eyes fell, by chance, upon my chest. Around the buttons of my uniform were entwined a quantity of long, black hairs! One by one, with trembling fingers, I plucked them off and threw them away.

"I then called my orderly, feeling unable to see my friend that day; wishing, also, to reflect more fully upon what I ought to tell him. I had his letters carried to him, for which he gave the messenger a receipt. He asked after me most particularly, and, on being told I was ill—had had a sunstroke—appeared exceedingly anxious. Next morning I went to him, determined to

tell him the truth. He had gone out the evening before and not yet returned. I called again during the day; my friend was still absent. After waiting a week longer without news of him, I advised the authorities, and a judicial search was instituted. Not the slightest trace of his whereabouts or manner of disappearance was discovered.

"A minute inspection of the abandoned château revealed nothing of a suspicious character. There was no indication that a woman had been concealed there.

"After these fruitless researches all further efforts were abandoned, and in the fifty-six years that have elapsed since then I have heard nothing more."

The Relic

"To the Abbé Louis d'Ennemare, at Soissons:

"MY DEAR ABBÉ,—

"My marriage with your cousin is broken off in the stupidest manner, on account of a foolish trick which I involuntarily played my intended, in a fit of embarrassment, and I turn to you, my old school-fellow to help me out of the difficulty. If you can, I shall be grateful to you until I die.

"You know Gilberte, or rather you think you know her, for do we ever understand women? All their opinions, their ideas, their creeds, are a surprise to us. They are all full of twists and turns, of the unforeseen, or unintelligible arguments, of defective logic, and of obstinate ideas, which seem final, but which they alter because a little bird comes and perches on the window ledge.

"I need not tell you that your cousin is very religious, as she was brought up by the *White* (or was it the *Black?*) *Ladies* at Nancy. You know that better than I do, but what you perhaps do not know is that she is just as excitable

about other matters as she is about religion. She is as unstable as a leaf whirled away by the wind; and she is more of a girl than a woman, for she is moved or irritated in a moment, loves in a moment, hates in a moment, and changes in a moment. She is pretty, as you know, and more charming than I can say or you can guess.

"Well, we became engaged, and I adored her, as I adore her still, and she appeared to love me.

"One evening, I received a telegram summoning me to Cologne for a consultation, which might be followed by a serious and difficult operation. As I had to start the next morning, I went to wish Gilberte good-bye, and tell her that I should not dine with them on Wednesday, but on Friday, the day of my return. Ah! Take care of Fridays, for I assure you they are unlucky!

"When I told her that I had to go to Germany, I saw that her eyes filled with tears, but when I said I should be back very soon, she clapped her hands, and said:

"I am very glad you are going, then!

You must bring me back something; a mere trifle, just a souvenir, but a souvenir that you have chosen for me. You must find out what I should like best, do you hear? And then I shall see whether you have any imagination.'

"She thought for a few moments and then added:

"I forbid you to spend more than twenty francs on it. I want it for the intention and for the remembrance of your penetration, and not for its intrinsic value.'

"And then, after another moment's silence, she said, in a low voice, and with downcast eyes:

"If it costs you nothing in money, and if it is something very ingenious and pretty, I will—I will kiss you.'

"The next day, I was in Cologne. It was a case of a terrible accident, which had thrown a whole family into despair, and a difficult amputation was necessary. They put me up—I might almost say, they locked me up, and I saw nobody but people in tears, who almost deafened me with their lamentations. I operated on a man who appeared to be in a moribund state, and nearly died under my hands. I remained with him two nights, and then, when I saw that there was a chance of his recovery, I drove to the station. I had, however, made a mistake in the trains, and had an hour to wait, and so I wandered about the streets, still thinking of my poor patient, when a man accosted me. I do not know German, and he was totally ignorant of French, but at last I made out that he was offering me some reliques. I thought of Gilberte, for I knew her fanatical devotion, and here was my present ready

to hand, so I followed the man into a shop where religious objects were for sale, and I bought a *small piece of a bone of one of the Eleven Thousand Virgins*.

"The pretended relic was inclosed in a charming old silver box, and that determined my choice. Putting my purchase into my pocket, I went to the railway station, and so to Paris.

"As soon as I got home, I wished to examine my purchase again, and on taking hold of it, I found that the box was open and the relic lost! It was no good to hunt in my pocket, and to turn it inside out; the small bit of bone, which was no bigger than half a pin, had disappeared.

"You know my dear little Abbé, that my faith is not very great, but, as my friend you are magnanimous enough to put up with my coldness, to leave me alone, and wait for the future, as you say. But I absolutely disbelieve in the relics of second-hand dealers in piety, and you share my doubts in that respect. Therefore, the loss of that bit of sheep's carcass did not grieve me, and I easily procured a similar fragment, which I carefully fastened inside my casket and then I went to see my intended.

"As soon as she saw me, she ran up to me, smiling and anxious, and said to me:

"What have you brought?"

"I pretended to have forgotten, but she did not believe me, and I made her beg me, and beseech me, even. But when I saw that she was devoured by curiosity, I gave her the sacred silver box. She appeared overjoyed.

"A relic! Oh! A relic!"

"And she kissed the box passionately,

so that I was ashamed of my deception. She was not quite satisfied, however, and her uneasiness soon turned to terrible fear, and looking straight into my eyes, she said:

“‘Are you sure that it is authentic?’

“‘Absolutely certain.’

“‘How can you be so certain?’

“I was caught, for to say that I had bought it through a man in the streets would be my destruction. What was I to say? A wild idea struck me, and I said, in a low, mysterious voice:

“‘I stole it for you.’

“She looked at me with astonishment and delight in her large eyes.

“‘Oh! You stole it? Where?’

“‘In the cathedral; in the very shrine of the Eleven Thousand Virgins.’

“Her heart beat with pleasure, and she murmured:

“‘Oh! Did you really do that for me? Tell me all about it!’

“There was an end of it, and I could not go back. I made up a fanciful story, with precise details. I had given the custodian of the building a hundred francs to be allowed to go about the building by myself; the shrine was being repaired, but I happened to be there at the breakfast time of the workmen and clergy; by removing a small panel, I had been enabled to seize a small piece of bone (oh! so small), among a quantity of others (I said a quantity, as I thought of the amount that the remains of the skeletons of eleven thousand virgins must produce). Then I went to a goldsmith's and bought a casket worthy of the relic; and I was not sorry to let her know that the silver box cost me five hundred francs.

“But she did not think of that; she

listened to me, trembling, in an ecstasy, and whispering: ‘How I love you!’ she threw herself into my arms.

“Just note this: I had committed sacrilege for her sake; I had committed a theft; I had violated a shrine; violated and stolen holy relics, and for that she adored me, thought me loving, tender, divine. Such is woman, my dear Abbé, every woman.

“For two months I was the best of lovers. In her room she had made a kind of magnificent chapel in which to keep this bit of mutton chop which, as she thought, had made me commit that love-crime, and she worked up her religious enthusiasm in front of it every morning and evening. I had asked her to keep the matter secret, for fear, as I said, that I might be arrested, condemned, and given over to Germany, and she kept her promise.

“Well, at the beginning of the summer she was seized by an irresistible wish to see the scene of my exploit, and she begged her father so persistently (without telling him her secret reason), that he took her to Cologne, but without telling me of their trip, according to his daughter's wish.

“I need not tell you that I had not seen the interior of the cathedral. I do not know where the tomb (if there be a tomb) of the Eleven Thousand Virgins is, and then, it appears that it is unapproachable, alas!

“A week afterward I received ten lines, breaking off our engagement, and then an explanatory letter from her father, whom she had, somewhat late, taken into her confidence.

“At the sight of the shrine, she had suddenly seen through my trickery and

my lie, and had also found out that I was innocent of any other crime. Having asked the keeper of the relics whether any robbery had been committed, the man began to laugh, and pointed out to them how impossible such a crime was, but from the moment I had plunged my profane hand into venerable relics, I was no longer worthy of my fair-haired and delicate betrothal.

"I was forbidden the house! I begged and prayed in vain, nothing could move the fair devotee, and I grew ill from grief. Well, last week, her cousin, Madame d'Arville, who is also your relative, sent word that she should like to see me, and when I called, she told me on what conditions I might obtain my pardon, and here they are. I must bring Gilberte a relic, a real, authentic relic, certified to be such by our Holy Father, the Pope, of some virgin and martyr, and I am going mad from embarrassment and anxiety.

"I will go to Rome, if needful, but I cannot call on the Pope unexpectedly and tell him my stupid adventure; and,

besides, I doubt whether they let private individuals have relics. Could not you give me an introduction to some cardinal, or only to some French prelate, who possesses some remains of a female saint? Or perhaps you may have the precious object she wants in your collection?

"Help me out of my difficulty, my dear Abbé, and I promise you that I will be converted ten years sooner than I otherwise should be!

"Madame d'Arville, who takes the matter seriously, said to me the other day:

" 'Poor Gilberte will never marry.'

"My dear old schoolfellow, will you allow your cousin to die the victim of a stupid piece of business on my part? Pray prevent her from being the eleventh thousand and one virgin.

"Pardon me, I am unworthy, but I embrace you, and love you with all my heart.

"Your old friend,
"HENRI FONTAL."

The Marquis

It was quite useless to expostulate when obstinate little Sonia, with a Russian name and Russian caprices, had said: "I choose to do it." She was so delicate and pretty, with her slightly turned-up nose and her rosy and childish cheeks. Every female perversity was reflected in the depths of her strange eyes, which were the color of the sea on a stormy evening. Yes, she was very

charming, very fantastic, and above all, so Russian, so deliciously and imperiously Russian, the more so as she came from Montmartre. In spite of this, not one of the seven lovers who composed her usual court had laughed when their enslaver said one day:

"You know my feudal castle at Pludun-Herlouët, near Saint Jacut-de-la-Mer, which I bought two years ago, and

in which I have not yet set foot? Very well; then! The day after to-morrow, which is the first of May, we will have a housewarming there."

The seven had not asked for any further explanation, but had accompanied little Sonia, and were now ready to sit down to dinner under her presidency in the dining-room of the old castle, which was about ten hours' distant from Paris. They had arrived there that morning; they were going to have dinner and supper together, and were to start off again at daybreak next morning; such were Sonia's orders, and nobody had made the slightest objection.

Two of her admirers, however, who were not yet used to her sudden whims, had felt some surprise. But this was quickly checked by expressions of enthusiastic pleasure on the part of the others.

"What a delightfully original idea! Nobody else would have thought of such a thing! Positively, nobody else. Oh! these Russians!" But those who had known her for some time, and who had been consequently educated not to be surprised at anything, found it all quite natural.

It was half past six in the evening, and the gentlemen were going to dress. Sonia had made up her mind to keep on her morning-gown, or if she dressed, she would do so later. Just then, she was not inclined to move out of her great rocking-chair from which she could see the sun setting over the sea. The sight always delighted her very much. It might have been taken for a large, red billiard ball, rebounding from the green cloth. How funny it was! And how lucky that she was all alone to

look at it, for those seven would not have understood it at all! Men never have any soul, have they?

The sunset was novel at first, but at length it made her sad, and Sonia's heart felt almost heavy, though the very sadness was sweet. She was congratulating herself more than ever on being alone, so as to enjoy that languor which was like a gentle dream when, in perfect harmony with that melancholy and sweet sensation, a voice rose from the road beneath the terrace, a tremulous, but fresh and pure voice, and sang the following words to a slow melody:

"Walking in Paris,
Having a drink,
A friend of mine whispered;
What do you think?
If love makes you thirsty,
Then wine makes you lusty."

The sound died away, as the singer continued on his way, and Sonia was afraid that she should not hear the rest. That would have been terrible; so she jumped out of the rocking-chair, ran to the balustrade of the terrace, and leaning over it, she called out: "Sing it again! I insist on it. The song, the whole song!"

On hearing this, the singer looked round and then came back — without hurrying, however, and as if prompted by curiosity rather than by any desire to comply with her order. Holding his hand over his eyes, he looked at Sonia attentively, and she, on her part, had plenty of time to look closely at him.

He was an old man of about sixty-five, and his rags and the wallet over his shoulder denoted a beggar, but Sonia immediately noticed that there was a

certain amount of affectation in his wretchedness. His hair and beard were not matted and ragged, as is usual with beggars, and evidently he had them cut occasionally. Besides he had a fine, and even distinguished face, as Sonia said to herself. But she did not pay much attention to that, as for some time she had noticed that old men at the seaside nearly all looked like gentlemen.

When he got to the foot of the terrace the beggar stopped, wagged his head and said: "Pretty! The little woman is very pretty!" But he did not obey Sonia's order, and she repeated it, almost angrily this time, beating a violent tattoo on the stonework: "The song, the whole song!"

He did not seem to hear, but stood there gaping, with a vacant smile on his face, and as his head was inclined toward his left shoulder, a thin stream of saliva trickled from his lips on to his beard. His looks became more and more ardent. "How stupid I am!" thought Sonia suddenly. "Of course he is waiting for something." She felt in her pocket, in which she always carried some gold by way of half-pence, took out a twenty-franc piece and threw it down to the old man. He, however, did not take any notice of it, but continued looking at her ecstatically. He was only roused from his state of bliss by receiving a handful of gravel which she threw at him, right in his face.

"Do sing!" she exclaimed. "You must; I will have it; I have paid you."

Still smiling, he picked up the napoleon and threw it back on to the terrace, and then said proudly, though in a very gentle voice: "I do not ask for charity, little lady; but if it give you

pleasure, I will sing you the whole song, the whole of it, as often as you please." And he began the song again, in his tremulous voice, which was more tremulous than it had been before, as if he were much touched.

Sonia was overcome and unconsciously moved to tears; delighted because the man had spoken to her so familiarly, and rather ashamed at having treated him as a beggar. Her whole being was carried away by the slow rhythm of the melody, which related an old love story, and when he had ended he again looked at her with a smile. As she was crying he said to her:

"I daresay you have a beautiful horse, or a little dog that you are very fond of, which is ill? Take me to it, and I will cure it: I understand it thoroughly. I will do it *gratis*, because you are so pretty."

She could not help laughing:

"You must not laugh," he said. "What are you laughing at? Because I am poor? But I am not, for I had work yesterday, and again to-day. I have a bag full. See, look here!" And from his belt he drew a leather purse in which coppers rattled. He poured them out into the palm of his hand, and said merrily: "You see, little one, I have a purse. Forty-seven sous; forty-seven!"*

"So you will not take my napoleon?" Sonia said:

"Certainly not," he replied. "I do not want it; and then, I tell you again, I will not accept alms. So you do not know me?"

"No, I do not."

*About 47 cents

"Very well, ask anyone in the neighborhood. Everybody will tell you that the Marquis does not live on charity."

The Marquis! At that name she suddenly remembered that two years ago she had heard his story. It was at the time that she bought the property, and the vendor had mentioned the Marquis as one of the curiosities of the soil. He was said to be half silly, at any rate an original, almost in his dotage, living by any lucky bits that he could make as horse-coper and veterinary. The peasants gave him a little work, as they feared that he might throw spells over anyone who refused to employ him. They also respected him on account of his former wealth and of his title, for he had been very rich, and really was a marquis. It was said that he had ruined himself in Paris by speculating. The reason, of course, was *women!*

At that moment the dinner bell began to ring, and a wild idea entered Sonia's head. She ran to the little door that opened on to the terrace, overtook the musician, and with a ceremonious bow she said to him: "Will you give me the pleasure and the honor of dining with me, Marquis?"

The old man left off smiling and grew serious: he put his hand to his forehead, as if to bring old recollections back, and then with a very formal, old-fashioned bow, he said: "With pleasure, my dear." And letting his wallet drop, he offered Sonia his arm.

When she introduced this new guest to them, all the seven, even to the best drilled, started. "I see what disturbs you," she said. "It is his dress. Well! It really leaves much to be desired.

But wait a moment, that can soon be arranged."

She rang for her lady's maid and whispered something to her. Then she said: "Marquis, your bath is ready in your dressing-room. If you will follow Sabina she will show you to it. These gentlemen and I will wait dinner for you." And as soon as he had gone out she said to the youngest there: "And now, Ernest, go upstairs and undress; I will allow you to dine in your morning coat, and you will give your dress coat and the rest to Sabina, for the Marquis."

Ernest was delighted at having to play a part in the piece, and the six others applauded. "Nobody else could think of such things; nobody, nobody!"

Half an hour later they were sitting at dinner, the Marquis in a dress coat on Sonia's left. It was a great disappointment for the seven. They had reckoned on having some fun with him, and especially Ernest, who being a wit, had intended to *draw him*. But at the first attempt of this sort, Sonia had given him a look which they all understood. Dinner began very ceremoniously for the seven, but merrily and without restraint between Sonia and the old man.

They cut very long faces, did the seven, but inwardly, if one may say so, for of course they could not dream of showing how put out they were. But the inward long faces grew longer still, when Sonia said to the old fellow, quite suddenly: "How stupid these gentlemen are! Suppose we leave them to themselves?"

The Marquis rose, offered her his arm again and said: "Where shall we go to?"—But Sonia's only reply was to sing

the couplet of that song, which she had remembered:

“For three years I passed
The nights with my love,
On a beautiful couch
In a splendid alcove.
Though wine makes me sleepy,
Yet love keeps me frisky.”

The seven, who were altogether exasperated this time, and could not conceal their vexation, saw the couple disappear through the door which led to Sonia's apartments.

“Hum!” Ernest ventured to say, “this is really rather strong!”

“Yes,” the eldest of the menagerie replied. “It certainly is rather strong, but it will do! You know there is nobody like her for thinking of such things!”

The next morning, the château bell woke them up at six o'clock, the hour they had agreed on to return to Paris. The seven men asked each other whether they should go and wish Sonia good morning, as usual, before she was out of her room. Ernest hesitated more than any of them about it, and it was not until Sabina, her maid, came and told them that her mistress insisted upon it, that they could make up their minds to do so. They were surprised to find Sonia in bed by herself.

“Well!” Ernest asked boldly, “and what about the Marquis?”

“He left very early,” Sonia replied.

“A queer sort of Marquis, I must say!” Ernest observed, contemptuously, and growing bolder: “Why, I should like to know?”

Sonia replied, drawing herself up. “The man has his own habits, I suppose!”

“Do you know, Madame,” Sabina observed, “that he came back half an hour after he left?”

“Ah!” said Sonia, getting up and walking about the room. “He came back? What did he want, I wonder?”

“He did not say, Madame. He merely went upstairs to see you. He was dressed in his old clothes again.”

Suddenly Sonia uttered a loud cry, and clapped her hands, and the seven came round to see what had caused her emotion.

“Look here! Just look here!” she cried. “Do look on the mantelpiece! It is really charming! Do look!”

And with a smiling, yet somewhat melancholy expression in her eyes, with a tender look which they could not understand, she showed them a small bunch of wild flowers, by the side of a heap of half-pennies. Mechanically she took them up and counted them, and then began to cry.

There were forty-seven of them.

A Deer Park in the Provinces

It is not very long ago that an Hungarian Prince, who was an officer in the Austrian cavalry regiment, was quar-

tered in a wealthy Austrian garrison town. The ladies of the local aristocracy naturally did everything they

could to allure the new-comer, who was young, good-looking, animated, and amusing, into their nets, and at last one of these ripe beauties, who was now resting on her amorous laurels, after innumerable victories on the hot floors of Viennese society, succeeded in taking him in her toils. But only for a short time, for she had very nearly reached that limit in age where, on the man's side, love ceases and esteem begins. She had more sense, however, than most women, and she recognized the fact in good time. As she did not wish to give up the leading part which she played in society there so easily she reflected as to what means she could employ to bind him to her in another manner. It is well known that the notorious Madame de Pompadour, who was one of the mistresses of Louis XV. of France, when her own charms did not suffice to fetter that changeable monarch, conceived the idea of securing the chief power in the State and in society for herself, by having a pavilion in the deer park—which belonged to her, and where Louis XV. was in the habit of hunting—fitted up with every accommodation of a harem, where she brought beautiful women and girls of all ranks of life to the arms of her royal lover.

Inspired by such an historical example, the Baroness began to arrange evening parties, balls, and private theatricals in the winter, and, in the summer excursions into the country. Thus she gave the Prince, who at that time was still, so to say, at her feet, the opportunity of plucking fresh flowers. But even this clever expedient did not avail in the long run, for beautiful women were scarce in that provincial town, and

the few which the local aristocracy could produce were not able to offer the Prince any fresh attraction, when he had made their closer acquaintance. At last, therefore, he turned his back on these highly-born Messalinas, and began to bestow marked attention on the pretty women and girls of the middle classes, either in the streets or when he was in his box at the theater.

There was one girl in particular, the daughter of a well-to-do merchant, who was supposed to be the most beautiful girl in the capital. On her his opera glass was constantly leveled, and he even followed her occasionally without being noticed. But this modern Pompadour soon got wind of his unprincely taste, and determined to do everything in her power to keep her lover and the whole nobility, which was also threatened, from such an unheard-of disgrace as the intrigue of a prince with a girl of the middle classes.

"It is really sad," the outraged Baroness once said to me, "that in these days princes and monarchs choose their mistresses only from the stage, or from the scum of the people. But it is the fault of our ladies themselves. They mistake their vocation! Ah! Where are those delightful times when the daughters of the first families looked upon it as an honor to become their prince's mistress?"

Consequently, the horror of the blue-blooded, aristocratic lady was intense when the Prince, in his usual, amiable, careless manner, suggested to her to people her deer park with girls of the lower orders.

"It is a ridiculous prejudice," the Prince said on that occasion, "which

oblige us to shut ourselves off from the other ranks, and to confine ourselves altogether to our own circle, for monotony and boredom are the inevitable consequences of it. How many honorable men of sense and education, and especially how many charming women and girls there are, not of the aristocracy, who would infuse fresh life and a new charm into our dull, listless society! I very much wish that a lady like you would make a beginning, would give up an exclusiveness which cannot be maintained in these days, and would enrich our circle with the charming daughters of middle-class families."

A wish of the Prince's was as good as a command; so the Baroness made a wry face, but accommodated herself to circumstances, and promised to invite some of the prettiest girls of the plebes to a ball in a few days. She really issued a number of invitations, and even condescended to drive to the house of each of them in person.

"But I must ask one thing of you," she said to each of the pretty girls, "and that is to come dressed as simply as possible; washing muslins will be best. The Prince dislikes all finery and ostentation, and he would be very vexed with me if I were the cause of any extravagance on your part."

The great day arrived. It was quite an event for the little town, and all classes of society were in a state of the greatest excitement. The pretty, plebeian girls, with the one whom the Prince had first noticed at their head, appeared in all their innocence, in plain, washing dresses, according to the

Prince's orders, with their hair plainly dressed, and without any ornament except their own fresh charms. They were all captives in the den of the proud, aristocratic Baroness, and the poor little mice were very much terrified when suddenly the aristocratic ladies came into the ball-room, rustling in whole oceans of silks and lace, with their haughty heads changed into so many hanging gardens of Semiramis, loaded with all the treasures of the Indies, and radiant as the sun.

At first the poor girls looked down in shame and confusion, and the Baroness's eyes glistened with all the joy of triumph. But her ill-natured pleasure did not last long, for the intrigue on which the Prince's ignoble passions were to make shipwreck recoiled on the highly-born lady patroness of the deer park.

No, the aristocratic ladies in their magnificent toilettes did not throw the girls from the middle classes into the shade. On the contrary, these pretty girls in their washing dresses, and with the plain but splendid ornament of their abundant hair, looked more charming than they would have looked in silk dresses and long trains, with flowers in their hair; and the novelty and unwontedness of their appearance there allured not only the Prince, but all the other gentlemen and officers, so that the proud granddaughters of heraldic lions, griffins, and eagles were quite neglected by the gentlemen, who danced almost exclusively with the pretty girls of the middle class.

The faded lips of the Baroness and Countesses uttered many a "For shame!" but all in vain. Neither was

it any good for the Baroness to make up her mind that she would never again put a social medley before the Prince in her drawing-room, for he had seen through

her intrigue, and gave her up altogether, *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

The Baroness, however, consoled herself as best she could.

An Adventure

“COME! Come!” said Pierre Du-faille, shrugging his shoulders. “Do you know what you are talking about, when you say that there are no more adventures? Say that there are no more adventurous men and you will be right! Yes, nobody takes a chance, in these days, for as soon as there is any slight mystery, or a spice of danger, they draw back. If, however, a man is willing to go into anything blindly and to run the risk of anything that may happen he can still meet with adventures. Even I, who never look for them, met with one in my life, and a very startling one. Let me tell you of it.

“I was staying in Florence, and was living very quietly. All I indulged in, in the way of adventures, was to listen occasionally to the immoral proposals with which every stranger is beset at night on the Piazza della Signora, by some worthy Pandarus or other, with a head like that of a venerable priest. These excellent fellows generally introduce you to their families, where debauchery is carried on in a very simple and almost patriarchal fashion, and where one does not run the slightest risk.

“One day as I was admiring Benvenuto Cellini’s wonderful Perseus, in front of the Loggia dei Lanzi, I suddenly felt my sleeve pulled somewhat roughly. On

turning round, I found myself face to face with a woman of about fifty who said to me with a strong German accent: ‘You are French, Monsieur, are you not?’

“‘Certainly, I am.’ I replied.

“‘And would you like to go home with a very pretty woman?’

“‘Most certainly I should,’ I replied, with a laugh.

“Nothing could have been funnier than the looks and serious air of the procuress, save the strangeness of the proposal, made in broad daylight, and in very bad French. It was even worse when she added: ‘Do you know everything they do in Paris?’

“‘What do you mean, my good woman?’ I asked her, rather startled. ‘What is done in Paris that is not done everywhere else?’

“However, when she explained her meaning, I replied that I certainly did not, and as I was not quite so immodest as the lady, I blushed a little. But not for long, for almost immediately afterward I grew pale, when she said: ‘I want to assure myself of it personally.’ And she said this in the same phlegmatic manner, which did not seem so funny to me now, but, on the contrary, rather frightened me.

“‘What!’ I said. ‘Personally! You! Explain yourself!’

“If I had been rather surprised before, I was now altogether astonished at her explanation. It was indeed an adventure—almost like a romance. I could scarcely believe my ears, but this is what she told me.

“She was the confidential attendant on a lady moving in high society, who wished to be initiated into the most secret refinements of Parisian high life, and had done me the honor of choosing me for her companion. But then, this preliminary test!

“‘By Jove!’ I said to myself, ‘this old German hag is not so stupid as she looks!’ And I laughed in my sleeve, as I listened inattentively to what she was saying to persuade me.

“‘My mistress is the prettiest woman you can dream of; a real beauty; springtime! A flower!’

“‘You must excuse me, but if your mistress is really like springtime and a flower, you (pray excuse me for being so blunt) are not exactly that, and perhaps I should not exactly be in a mood to humor you, my dear lady, in the same way that I might her.’

“She jumped back, astonished in turn: ‘Why, I only want to satisfy myself with my own eyes; not by injuring you.’ And she finished her explanation, which had been incomplete before. All she had to do was to go with me to ‘Mother Patata’s well-known establishment, and there to be present while I conversed with one of its fair and frail inhabitants.

“‘Oh!’ I said to myself, ‘I was mistaken in her tastes. She is of course an old, shriveled-up woman, as I guessed,

but she is a specialist. This is interesting; upon my word! I never met with such a one before!’

“Here, gentlemen, I must beg you to allow me to hide my face for a moment. What I said was evidently not strictly correct, and I am rather ashamed of it; my excuse must be, that I was young, that Patata’s was a celebrated place, of which I had heard wonderful things said, but the entry to which was barred me, on account of my small means. Five napoleons was the price! Fancy! I could not treat myself to it, and so I accepted the good lady’s offer. I do not say that it was not disagreeable, but what was I to do? And then, the old woman was a German, and so her five napoleons were a slight return for our five milliards, which we paid them as our war indemnity.

“Well, Patata’s boarder was charming, the old woman was not too troublesome, and your humble servant did his best to sustain the ancient glory of Frenchmen.

“Let me drink my disgrace to the dregs! On the next day but one after, I was waiting at the statue of Perseus. It was shameful, I confess, but I enjoyed the partial restitution of the five milliards, and it is surprising how a Frenchman loses his dignity when he is traveling.

“The good lady made her appearance at the appointed time. It was quite dark and I followed her without a word, for, after all, I was not very proud of the part I was playing. But if you only knew how fair that little girl at Patata’s was. As I went along, I thought only of her, and did not pay any attention to where we were going. I was only

roused from my reverie by hearing the old woman say: 'Here we are. Try and be as entertaining as you were the day before yesterday.'

"We were not outside Patata's house, but in a narrow street running by the side of a palace with high walls, and in front of us was a small door, which the old woman opened gently.

"For a moment I felt inclined to draw back. Apparently the old hag was also ardent on her own account! She had me in a trap! No doubt she wanted in her turn to make use of my small talents! But, no! That was impossible!

"'Go in! Go in!' she said. 'What are you afraid of? My mistress is so pretty, so pretty, much prettier than the little girl of the other day.'

"So it was really true, this story out of 'The Arabian Nights?' Why not? And after all, what was I risking? The good woman would certainly not injure me, and so I went in, though somewhat nervously.

"My friend, what an hour I spent there! Paradise! It would be useless, impossible to describe it to you. Apartments fit for a princess, and one of those princesses out of fairy tales, a fairy herself. An exquisite German woman, exquisite as German women can be, when they try. An Undine of Heinrich Heine's, with hair like the Virgin Mary's, innocent blue eyes, and a skin like strawberries and cream.

"Suddenly, however, my Undine got up, and her face convulsed with fury and pride. Then, she rushed behind some hangings, where she began to give vent to a flood of German words, which I did not understand, while I remained

standing, dumfounded. But just then the old woman came in, and said, shaking with fear: 'Quick, quick; dress yourself and go, if you do not wish to be killed.'

"I asked no questions, for what was the good of trying to understand? Besides, the old woman, who grew more and more terrified, could not find any French words, and chattered wildly. I jumped up and got into my shoes and overcoat and ran down the stairs and into the street.

"Ten minutes later, I recovered my breath and my senses, without knowing what streets I had been through, nor where I had come from, and I stole furtively into my hotel, as if I had been a malefactor.

"In the *cafés* the next morning, nothing was talked of except a crime that had been committed during the night. A German Baron had killed his wife with a revolver, but had been liberated on bail, as he had appealed to his counsel, to whom he had given the following explanation, to the truth of which the lady companion of the Baroness had certified.

"She had been married to her husband almost by force; she detested him, and had some particular reasons (which were not specified) for her hatred of him. In order to have her revenge on him, she had had him seized, bound, and gagged by four hired ruffians, who had been caught, and who had confessed everything. Thus, reduced to immobility, and unable to help himself, the Baron had been obliged to witness a degrading scene, in which his wife caressed a Frenchman, and thus outraged conjugal fidelity and German honor at

the same time. As soon as he was set at liberty, the Baron had punished his faithless wife, and was now seeking her accomplice."

"And what did you do?" some one asked Pierre Dufaille.

"The only thing I could do, by George!" he replied. "I put myself at the poor devil's disposal; it was his

right, and so we fought a duel. Alas! It was with swords, and he ran me right through the body. That was also his right, but he exceeded his right when he called me her *ponce*. Then I gave him his change, and as I fell, I called out with all the strength that remained to me: 'A Frenchman! A Frenchman! Long live France!'"

The Bed

ON a hot afternoon during last summer, the large auction rooms seemed asleep, and the auctioneers were knocking down the various lots in a listless manner. In a back room, on the first floor, two or three lots of old silk ecclesiastical vestments were lying in a corner.

They were copes for solemn occasions, and graceful chasubles on which embroidered flowers surrounded symbolic letters on a yellowish ground, which had originally been white. Some secondhand dealers were there, two or three men with dirty beards, and a fat woman with a big stomach, one of those women who deal in secondhand finery and manage illicit love affairs, women who are brokers in old and young human flesh, just as much as they are in new and old clothes.

Presently, a beautiful Louis XV. chasuble was put up for sale, which was as pretty as the dress of a marchioness of that period. It had retained all its colors, and was embroidered with lilies of the valley round the cross, and long blue irises, which came up to the foot

of the sacred emblem, and with wreaths of roses in the corners. When I had bought it, I noticed that there was a faint scent about it, as if it were permeated with the remains of incense, or still pervaded by delicate, sweet scents of bygone years, by the memory of a perfume, the soul of an evaporated essence.

When I got home, I wished to have a small chair of the same period covered with it; and as I was handling it in order to take the necessary measures, I felt some paper beneath my fingers. When I cut the lining, some letters fell at my feet. They were yellow with age, and the faint ink was the color of rust; outside the sheets, which were folded in the fashion of years long past, it was addressed in a delicate hand "To Monsieur l'Abbé d'Argence."

The first three letters merely settled places of meeting, but here is the third:

"MY FRIEND,—I am very unwell, ill in fact, and I cannot leave my bed. The rain is beating against my windows, and I lie dreaming comfortably and warmly

under my eider-down coverlet. I have a book of which I am very fond, and which seems as if it really applied to me. Shall I tell you what it is? No, for you would only scold me. Then, when I have read a little, I think, and will tell you what about.

"Having been in bed for three days, I think about my bed, and even in my sleep I meditate on it still. I have come to the conclusion that the bed comprehends our whole life; for we were born in it, we live in it, and we shall die in it. If, therefore, I had Monsieur de Crébillon's pen, I should write the history of a bed, and what exciting and terrible, as well as delightful and moving, occurrences would not such a book contain! What lessons and what subjects for moralizing could one not draw from it, for everyone?

"You know my bed, my friend, but you will never guess how many things I have discovered in it within the last three days, and how much more I love it, in consequence. It seems to me to be inhabited, haunted, if I may say so, by a number of people I never thought of who, nevertheless, have left something of themselves in that couch.

"Ah! I cannot understand people who buy new beds, beds to which no memories or cares are attached. Mine, ours, which is so shabby, and so spacious, must have held many existences in it, from birth to the grave. Think of that, my friend; think of it all; review all those lives, a great part of which was spent between these four posts, surrounded by these hangings embroidered by human figures, which have seen so many things. What have they seen during the three cen-

turies since they were first put up?

"Here is a young woman lying in this bed.

"From time to time she sighs, and then she groans and cries out; her mother is with her, and presently a little creature that makes a noise like a cat mewling, and which is all shiveled and wrinkled, appears. It is a male child to which she has given birth, and the young mother feels happy in spite of her pain; she is nearly suffocated with joy at that first cry, and stretches out her arms, and those around her shed tears of pleasure. For that little morsel of humanity which has come from her means perpetuation of the blood, of the heart, and of the soul of the old people, who are looking on, trembling with excitement.

"And then, here are two lovers, who for the first time are together in that tabernacle of life. They tremble; but transported with delight, they have the delicious sensation of being close together, and by degrees their lips meet. That divine kiss makes them one, that kiss which is the gate of a terrestrial heaven, that kiss which speaks of human delights, which continually promises them, announces them, and precedes them. And their bed is agitated like the tempestuous sea, it bends and murmurs, and itself seems to become animated and joyous, for the maddening mystery of love is being accomplished on it. What is there sweeter, what more perfect in this world than those embraces which make one single being out of two, and which give to both of them at the same moment the same thought, the same expectation, and the same maddening pleasure, a joy which de-

scends upon them like a celestial and devouring fire?

"Do you remember those lines from some old poet, which you read to me last year? I should like to have them embroidered on the top of my bed, where Pyramus and Thisbe are continually looking at me out of their tapestried eyes.

"And think of death, my friend, of all those who have breathed out their last sigh to God in this bed. For it is also the tomb of hopes ended, the door which closes everything, after having been the entrance to the world. What cries, what anguish, what sufferings, what groans; how many arms stretched out toward the past; what appeals to a happiness that has vanished forever; what convulsions, what death-rattles, what gaping lips and distorted eyes, have there not been in this bed from which I am writing to you, during the three centuries that it has sheltered human beings!

"The bed, you must remember, is the symbol of life; I have discovered this within the last three days. There is nothing good except the bed, and are not some of our best moments spent in sleep?

"But then, again, we suffer in bed! It is the refuge of those who are ill and suffering; a place of repose and comfort for worn-out bodies, in one word, a part and parcel of humanity.

"Many other thoughts have struck me, but I have no time to note them down for you, and then, should I remember them all? Besides that I am so tired that I mean to shake up my pillows, stretch myself out at full length, and sleep a little. But be sure and come to see me at three o'clock tomorrow; perhaps I may be better, and able to prove it to you.

"Good-bye, my friend; here are my hands for you to kiss, and I also offer you my lips."

Under the Yoke

As he was a man of quiet and regular habits, of a simple and affectionate disposition, and had nothing to disturb the even tenor of his life, Monsieur de Loubancourt suffered from widowhood more than most men do. He regretted his lost happiness, was angry with the fate which separated a united couple so brutally, the fate which had pitched upon a tranquil existence, whose sleepy quietude had not been troubled by

any cares or chimeras, in order to rob it of happiness.

Had he been younger, he might, perhaps, have been tempted to form a new line, to fill up the vacant place, and to marry again. But when a man is nearly sixty such ideas make people laugh, for they have something ridiculous and insane about them. So he dragged on his dull and weary existence, shunned all those familiar objects which constantly

recalled the past to him and flitted from hotel to hotel without taking interest in anything, or becoming intimate with anyone, even temporarily; inconsolable, silent, enigmatic, and funereal in his eternal black clothes.

He was generally alone—though on rare occasions he was accompanied by his only son who used to yawn by stealth, and seemed to be mentally counting the hours as if he were performing some hateful, enforced duty in spite of himself.

Two years of this crystallization slipped by and one was as monotonous and as void of incident as the other.

One evening, however, in a boarding-house at Cannes, where he was staying on his wanderings, a young woman dressed in mourning, a new arrival, sat next to him at dinner. She had a sad, pale face that told of suffering, a beautiful figure, and large, blue eyes with deep rings round them, which, nevertheless, were like stars in the twilight.

All remarked her and although Lou-bancourt usually took no notice of women, no matter who they were, ugly or pretty, he looked at her and listened to her. He felt less lonely by her side, though he did not know why. He trembled with instinctive and confused happiness, just as if in some distant country he had found some female friend or relative, who at last would understand him, tell him some news, and talk to him in his dear native language about everything that a man leaves behind him when he exiles himself from home.

What strange affinity had thus thrown them together? What secret forces had brought their grief in contact? What

made him so sanguine and so calm, and incited him to take her suddenly into his confidence, and urged him on to resistless curiosity?

She was an experienced traveler, who had no illusions, and was in search of adventure; one of those women who frequently change their name, and who, as they have made up their mind to swindle if luck is not on their side, play the continuous rôle of adventuress; one who could put on every accent; who for the sake of her purse could transform herself into a Slav, or into an American, or simply into a provincial; who was ready to take part in any comedy in order to make money, and not be obliged to waste strength and brains on fruitless struggles or on wretched expedients. Thus she immediately guessed the state of this melancholy sexagenarian's mind, and the illusion which attracted him to her. She scented the spoils which offered themselves to her without struggle, and divined under what guise she could make herself accepted and loved.

She initiated him into depths of griefs which were unknown to him, by phrases which were cut short by sighs, by fragments of her story, which she finished by a disgusted shrug of the shoulders and a heartrending smile, and by insensibly exciting his feelings. In a word, she triumphed over the last remaining doubts which might still have mingled with the affectionate pity with which that poor, solitary heart, so full of bitterness, overflowed.

And so, for the first time since he had become a widower, the old man confided in another person, poured out his old heart into the soul which seemed

to be so like his own, which seemed to offer him a haven of cheer where the wounds of his heart could be healed. He longed to throw himself into those sisterly arms, to dry his tears, and to still his grief there.

* * * * *

Monsieur de Loubancourt, who had married at twenty-five, as much from love as from judgment, had lived quietly and peacefully in the country, rarely visiting Paris. He was ignorant of female wiles and of the temptations offered by creatures like Wanda Pulska, who are made up of lies, and only care for pleasure, a virgin soil on which any evil will grow.

She attached herself to him, became his shadow, and by degrees, part of his life. She showed herself to be a charitable woman who devoted herself to an unhappy man, endeavored to console him, and in spite of her youth was willing to be his inseparable companion in his slow, daily walks. She never appeared to tire of his anecdotes and reminiscences, and she played cards with him. She waited on him carefully when he was confined to his bed, appeared to have no sex, in fact, transformed herself; and though she handled him skillfully, she seemed ingenuous and ignorant of evil. She acted like an innocent young girl, who has just been confirmed; but for all that, she chose dangerous hours and certain spots in which to be sentimental and to ask questions which agitated and disconcerted him, abandoning her slender fingers to his feverish hands, which pressed and held them in a tender clasp.

And then, there were wild declara-

tions of love, prayers and sobs which frightened her; wild adieus, which were not followed by his departure, but which brought about a touching reconciliation and the first kiss; and then, one night, while they were traveling together, he opened the door of her bedroom at the hotel, which she had not locked, and came in like a madman. There was the phantom of resistance, and the fallacious submission of a woman who was overcome by so much tenderness, who rebelled no longer, but who accepted the yoke of her master and lover. And then, the conquest of the body after the conquest of the heart, while she forged his chains link by link, with pleasures which besot and corrupt old men, and dry up their brains, until at last he allowed himself to be induced, almost unconsciously, to make an odious and stupid will.

Informed, perhaps, by anonymous letters, or astonished because his father kept him altogether at a distance from him and gave no signs of life, Monsieur de Loubancourt's son joined them in Provence. But Wanda Pulska, who had been preparing for that attack for a long time, waited for it fearlessly.

She did not seem discomposed at that sudden visit, but was very charming and affable toward the newcomer, reassured him by the careless airs of a girl, who took life as it came, who was suffering from the consequences of a fault, and did not trouble her head about the future.

He envied his father and grudged him such a treasure. Although he had come to combat her dangerous influence, and to treat the woman who had assumed the place made vacant by death

—who governed her lover as his sovereign mistress—as an enemy, he shrank from his task, panted with desire, lost his head, and thought of nothing but treason and of an odious partnership.

She managed him even more easily than she had managed Monsieur de Loubancourt, molded him just as she chose, made him her tool, without even giving him the tips of her fingers, or granting him the slightest favor, induced him to be so imprudent that the old man grew jealous, watched them, discovered the intrigue, and found mad letters in which his son stormed, begged, threatened, and implored.

One evening, when she knew that her lover had come in, and was hiding in a dark cupboard in order to watch them, Wanda happened to be alone in the drawing-room, which was full of light and of beautiful flowers, with this young fellow of five-and-twenty. He threw himself at her feet and declared his love, and besought her to run away with him. When she tried to bring him to reason and repulsed him, and told him in a loud and distinct voice how she loved Monsieur de Loubancourt, he seized her wrists with brutal violence, and, maddened with passion, stammered out words of love and lust.

“Let me go,” she cried, “let me go immediately. You are a brute to take

advantage of a woman like that. Please let me go, or I shall call the servants to my assistance.”

The next moment the old man, terrible in his rage, rushed out of his hiding place with clenched fists and a slobbering mouth, threw himself on the startled son, and pointing to the door with a superb gesture, said:

“You are a dirty scoundrel, sir. Get out of my house immediately, and never let me see you again!”

* * * * *

The comedy was over. Grateful for such fidelity and real affection, Monsieur de Loubancourt married Wanda Pulska, whose name appeared on the civil register—a detail of no importance to a man who was in love—as Frida Krubstein; she came from Saxony, and had been a servant at an inn. Then he disinherited his son, as far as he could.*

And now that she is a respectable and respected widow, Madame de Loubancourt is received everywhere by society in those places of winter resort where people's antecedents are rarely gone into, and where women of noble name, who are pretty and can waltz—like the Germans can—are always well received.

*According to French law, nobody can altogether disinherit a child, and no son or daughter can be “cut off” with the proverbial “shilling.”

A Fashionable Woman

It can easily be proved that Austria is far richer in talented men, in every domain, than North Germany, but while

men are systematically drilled there for the vocation which they choose, just as Prussian soldiers are, with us they lack

the necessary training, especially technical training, and consequently very few of them get beyond mere dilettantism. Leo Wolfram was one of these intellectual dilettantes, and the more pleasure one took in his materials and characters, which were usually taken boldly from real life, and woven into a certain political, and what is still more, a plastic plot, the more one was obliged to regret that Wolfram had never learned to compose or to mold his characters or to write—in one word, that he had never become a literary artist. But how greatly he had in himself the materials for a master of narration, his "Dissolving Views," and still more his "Goldkind,"* prove.

"Goldkind" is a striking type of our modern society, and contains all the elements of a classic novel, although of course in a crude, unfinished state. What an exact reflection of our social circumstances Leo Wolfram gave in that story will be shown by our present reminiscences, in which a lady of that race plays the principal part.

Some ten years ago, four very stylishly dressed persons used to dine every day in a corner of the small dining-room of one of the best hotels in Vienna, and both there and elsewhere gave occasion for a great amount of talk. They were an Austrian landowner, his charming wife, and two young diplomatists, one of whom came from the North, while the other was a pure son of the South. There was no doubt that the lady came in for the greatest share of the general interest in every respect.

The practiced observer and discerner of human nature easily recognized in

her one of those characters which Goethe has so aptly named "problematical." She was one of those individuals who are always dissatisfied and at variance with themselves and with the world, who are a riddle to themselves, and can never be relied on. With the interesting and captivating, though unfortunate contradictions of her nature, she made a strong impression on everybody, as well as by her mere outward appearance. She was one of those women who are called beautiful, without their being really so. Her face, as well as her figure, lacked æsthetic lines, but there was no doubt, that, in spite of that, or perhaps on that very account, she was the most dangerously fascinating woman that one could imagine.

She was tall and thin, and there was a certain hardness about her figure which became a charm through the vivacity and grace of her movements. Her features harmonized with her figure, for she had a high, clever, cold forehead, a strong mouth with sensual lips, and an angular, sharp chin, the effect of which, however, was diminished by her small slightly turned-up nose, her beautifully arched eye-brows, and her large, animated, swimming blue eyes.

In her face, which was almost too full of expression for a woman, there was as much feeling, kindness, and candor as there was calculation, coolness, and deceit, and when she was angry and curled her upper lip, so as to show her dazzlingly white teeth, it had a devilish look of wickedness and cruelty. At

*Golden Child.

that time, when women still wore their own hair, the beauty of her long, chestnut plaits, which she coiled on the top of her head like a crown, was very striking. Besides this, she was remarkable for her elegant and tasteful dresses, and for a bearing which blended with the dignity of a lady of rank, that indefinable something which makes actresses and women who belong to the higher classes of the *demi-monde* so interesting to us.

In Paris she would have been taken for a *demi-mondaine*, but in Vienna the best drawing-rooms were open to her, and she was not looked upon as more respectable or less respectable than any other aristocratic beauties.

Her husband belonged to that class of men whom the witty Balzac so delightfully calls *les hommes prédestinés* in his "Physiologie du Mariage." Without doubt, he was a very good-looking man, but he bore that stamp of insignificance which often conceals coarseness and vulgarity, and was one of those men who, in the long run, become unendurable to a woman of refined tastes. He had a good private income, but his wife understood the art of enjoying life, and so a deficit in the yearly accounts of the young couple became the rule, without causing the lively lady to check her noble passions in the least on that account. She kept horses and carriages, rode with the greatest boldness, had her box at the opera, and gave beautiful little suppers, which at that time was the fad among Viennese women of her class.

One of the two young diplomats who accompanied her, a young Count, belonging to a well-known family in North

Germany, a perfect gentleman in the highest sense of the word, was looked upon as her adorer, while the other, the Count's most intimate friend, in spite of his ancient name and his position as *attaché* to a foreign legation, gave people a distinct impression that he was an adventurer of the sort the police watch closely. He had the reputation of being an unscrupulous and dangerous duelist. Short, thin, with a yellow complexion, with strongly-marked but engaging features, an aquiline nose, and bright, dark eyes, he was the typical picture of a man who seduces women and kills men.

The lady appeared to be in love with the Count and to take an interest in his friend. At least, that was the construction that the others in the dining-room put upon the situation, so far as it could be made out from the behavior and looks of the people concerned,—especially from their looks, for it was strange how devotedly and ardently the beautiful woman's blue eyes would rest on the Count, and with what wild, diabolical intensity she would gaze at the Italian from time to time. It was hard to guess whether there was more love or more hatred in that glance. None of the four, however, who were then dining and chatting so gaily together, had any presentiment that they were amusing themselves over a mine, which might explode at any moment, and bury them all.

It was the husband who provided the tinder. One day he told her that she must make up her mind to the most rigid retrenchment, must give up her box at the opera and sell her carriage and horses, if she did not wish to risk her whole position in society. His

creditors had lost all patience, and were threatening to distrain on his property, and even to put him in prison. She made no reply to this revelation, but during dinner she said to the Count, in a whisper, that she must speak to him later, and would, therefore, come to see him at his house. When it was dark she came thickly veiled and after she had responded to his demonstrations of affection for some time, with more patience than amiableness, she began (their conversation is extracted from his diary):

"You are so unconcerned and happy, while misery and disgrace are threatening me!"

"Please explain what you mean!"

"I have incurred some debts."

"Again?" he said reproachfully; then he added: "Why do you not come to me at once, for you must do it in the end, and then at least you would avoid any exposure?"

"Please do not take me to task," she replied; "you know it only makes me angry. I want some money; can you give me some?"

"How much do you want?"

She hesitated, for she had not the courage to name the real amount, but at last she said, in a low voice:

"Five thousand florins.*"

It was evidently only a small portion of what she really required, so he replied:

"I am sure you want more than that!"

"No."

"Really not?"

"Do not make me angry."

He shrugged his shoulders, went to his strong box, and gave her the money,

whereupon she nodded, and giving him her hand, she said: "You are always kind, and as long as I have you, I am not afraid; but if I were to lose you, I should be the most unhappy woman in the world."

"You always have the same fears; but I shall never leave you; it would be impossible for me to separate from you," the Count exclaimed.

"And if you die?" she interrupted him hastily.

"If I die?" the Count said with a peculiar smile. "I have provided for you in that eventuality also."

"Do you mean to say," she stammered, flushing, and her large, lovely eyes rested on her lover with an indescribable expression in them. He, however, opened a drawer in his writing-table and took out a document, which he gave her. It was his will. She opened it with almost indecent haste, and when she saw the amount—thirty thousand florins—she grew pale to her very lips.

That moment the germs of a crime were sown in her breast, but one of those crimes which cannot be touched by the Criminal Code. A few days after she paid her visit to the Count, she herself received one from the Italian. In the course of conversation he took a jewel case out of his breast pocket, asked her opinion of the ornaments, as she was well known for her taste in such matters, and told her at the same time that it was intended as a present for an actress, with whom he was on intimate terms.

"It is a magnificent set!" she said, as

*About \$2500, nominally.

she looked at it. "You have made an excellent selection." Then she suddenly became absorbed in thought, while her nostrils began to quiver, and that touch of cold cruelty played on her lips.

"Do you think that the lady for whom this ornament is intended will be pleased with it?" asked the Italian.

"Certainly," she replied; "I myself would give a great deal to have it."

"Then may I venture to offer it to you?" the Italian said.

She blushed, but did not refuse it. The same evening she rushed into her lover's room in a state of the greatest excitement.

"I am beside myself," she stammered; "I have been most deeply insulted."

"By whom?" the Count asked, excitedly.

"By your friend, who has dared to send me some jewelry to-day. I suppose he looks upon me as a lost woman; perhaps I am already looked upon as belonging to the *demi-monde*, and this I owe to you, to you alone, and to my mad love for you, to which I have sacrificed my honor and everything—everything!"

She threw herself down and sobbed, and would not be pacified until the Count gave her his word of honor that he would set aside every consideration for his friend, and obtain satisfaction for her at any price. He met the Italian the same evening at a card party and questioned him.

"I did not, in the first place, send the lady the jewelry, but gave it to her myself—not, however, until she had asked me to do so."

"That is a shameful lie!" the Count shouted, furiously. Unfortunately, there were others present, and his friend took the matter seriously, so the next morning he sent his seconds to the Count.

Some of their real friends tried to settle the matter in another way, but his bad angel, his mistress, who required thirty thousand florins, drove the Count to his death. He was found in the Prater with his friend's bullet in his chest. A letter in his pocket spoke of suicide, but the police did not doubt for a moment that a duel had taken place. Suspicion soon fell on the Italian, but when they went to arrest him, he had already made his escape.

The husband of the beautiful, problematical woman called on the dead man's broken-hearted father, who had hastened to Vienna on receipt of a telegraphic message, a few hours after his arrival, and demanded the money.

"My wife was your son's most intimate friend," he stammered, in embarrassment, in order to justify his action as well as he could.

"Oh! I know that," the old Count replied, "and female friends of that kind want to be paid immediately, and in full. Here are the thirty thousand florins."

And our "Goldkind?" She paid her debts, and then withdrew from the scene for a while. She had been compromised, certainly—but then, she had risen in value in the eyes of those numerous men who can only adore and sacrifice themselves for a woman when her foot is on the threshold of vice and crime.

I saw her last during the Franco-German war, in the beautiful Mirabell-

garden at Salzberg. She did not seem to feel any qualms of conscience, for she had become considerably stouter,

which made her more attractive, more beautiful, and consequently, more dangerous, than before.

Words of Love

"SUNDAY,——"

"You do not write to me, I never see you, you never come, so I must suppose that you have ceased to love me. But why? What have I done? Pray tell me, my own dear love. I love you so much, so dearly! I should like always to have you near me, to kiss you all day while I call you every tender name that I could think of. I adore you, I adore you, I adore you, my beautiful cock. Your affectionate hen.

"SOPHIE."

"MONDAY,——"

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"You will understand absolutely nothing of what I am going to say to you, but that does not matter, and if my letter happens to be read by another woman, it may be profitable to her.

"Hod you been deaf and dumb, I should no doubt have loved you for a very long time, and the cause of what has happened is that you can talk; that is all.

"In love, you see, dreams are always made to sing, but in order that they may do so, they must not be interrupted, and when one talks between two kisses, one always interrupts that frenzied dream which our souls indulge in, that is, unless they utter sublime words; and sublime words do not come out of the little mouths of pretty girls.

"You do not understand me at all, do you? So much the better; I will go on. You are certainly one of the most charming and adorable women I have ever seen.

"Are there any eyes on earth that contain more dreams than yours, more unknown promises, greater depths of love? I do not think so. And when that mouth of yours, with its curved lips, smiles and shows the ivory gates within, one is tempted to say that from this ravishing mouth comes ineffable music, something inexpressibly delicate, a sweetness which extorts sighs.

"It is then that you speak to me, and that is what troubles me, don't you see, troubles me more than tongue can tell. I would prefer never to see you at all.

"You go on pretending not to understand anything, do you not? But I calculated on that.

"Do you remember the first time you came to see me at my residence? How gaily you stepped inside, an odor of violets, which clung to your skirts, heralding your entrance; how we looked at each other, for ever so long, without uttering a word, after which we embraced like two fools. Then from that time to the end we never exchanged a word.

"But when we separated, did not our trembling hands and our eyes say many

things, things which cannot be expressed in any language. At least, I thought so; and when you went away, you murmured:

“‘We shall meet again soon!’

“That was all you said, and you will never guess what delightful dreams you left me, all that I, as it were, caught a glimpse of, all that I fancied I could guess in your thoughts.

“You see, my poor child, for men who are not stupid, who are rather refined and somewhat superior, love is such a complicated instrument that the merest trifle puts it out of order. You women never perceive the ridiculous side of certain things when you love, and you fail to see the grotesqueness of some expressions.

“Why does a word which sounds quite right in the mouth of a small, dark woman seem quite wrong and funny in the mouth of a fat, light-haired woman? Why are the wheedling ways of the one altogether out of place in the other?

“Why is it that certain caresses which are delightful from the one should be wearisome from the other? Why? Because in everything, and especially in love, perfect harmony—absolute agreement in motion, voice, words, and in demonstrations of tenderness, is necessary in the person who moves, speaks, and manifests affection; harmony is necessary in age, in height, in the color of the hair, and in the style of beauty.

“If a woman of thirty-five, who has arrived at the age of violent tempestuous passion, were to preserve the slightest traces of the caressing archness of her love affairs at twenty, were not to understand that she ought to express herself differently, look at her

lover differently and kiss him differently, were not to see that she ought to be a Dido and not a Juliette, she would infallibly disgust nine lovers out of ten, even if they could not account to themselves for their estrangement. Do you understand me? No? I hoped so.

“From the time that you gave rein to your tenderness, it was all over for me, my dear friend. Sometimes we would embrace for five minutes, in one interminable kiss, one of those kisses which makes lovers close their eyes, lest part of it should escape through their clouded soul which it is ravaging. And then, when our lips separated, you would say to me:

“‘That was nice, you fat old dog.’

“At such moments, I could have beaten you; for you gave me successively all the names of animals and vegetables which you doubtless found in some cookery book, or gardener’s manual. But that is nothing.

“The caresses of love are brutal, bestial, and if one comes to think of it, grotesque! Oh! My poor child, what joking elf, what perverse sprite could have prompted the concluding words of your letter to me? I have made a collection of them, but out of love for you, I will not show them to you.

“And sometimes you really said things which were quite inopportune. For instance you managed now and then to let out an exalted *I love you!* on such singular occasions that I was obliged to restrain a strong desire to laugh. There are times when the words *I love you!* are so out of place that they become indecorous; let me tell you that.

“But you do not understand me, and many other women also will not under-

stand me, but think me stupid, though that matters very little to me. Hungry men eat like gluttons, but people of refinement are disgusted at it and often feel an invincible dislike for a dish, on account of a mere trifle. It is the same with love, as with cookery.

"What I cannot comprehend for example is that certain women who fully understand the irresistible attraction of fine, embroidered stockings, the exquisite charm of shades, the witchery of valuable lace concealed in the depths of their underclothing, the exciting zest of hidden luxury, and all the subtle delicacies of female elegance, never understands the invincible disgust with which words that are out of place or foolishly tender, inspire us.

"At times coarse and brutal expres-

sions work wonders, as they excite the senses and make the heart beat, and they are allowable at the hours of combat. Is not that sentence of Cambronne's sublime?*

"Nothing shocks us that comes at the right time; but then, we must also know when to hold our tongue, and to avoid phrases à la Paul de Kock, at certain moments.

"And I embrace you passionately, on the condition that you say nothing.

"RENÉ."

*At Waterloo, General Cambronne is reported to have said, when called on to surrender: "The Guard dies, but does not surrender." But according to Victor Hugo, in "Les Misérables," he used the expression "*Merde!*" which cannot be put into English fit for ears polite.

The Upstart

You know good-natured, stout Dupontel, who looks like the type of a happy man, with fat cheeks the color of ripe apples, a small, reddish mustache, turned up over his thick lips, prominent eyes, which never know any emotion or sorrow, and remind one of the calm eyes of cows and oxen, and a long back fixed on to two wriggling crooked legs, which have obtained for him the nickname of "corkscrew" from some nymph of the ballet.

Dupontel, who had taken the trouble to be born, but not like the grand seigneurs whom Beaumarchais made fun of once upon a time, was ballasted with a respectable number of millions, as be-

fitted the sole heir of a house that had sold household utensils and appliances for over a century.

Naturally, like every other upstart who respects himself, he wished to appear to be something, to be known as a clubman, and to play to the gallery, because he had been educated at Vaugirard and knew a little English, had gone through his voluntary service in the army for twelve months* at Rouen;

*Although, in France, as in Germany, military service is compulsory, men are allowed to serve in both countries as *one-year volunteers*; they enjoy certain privileges, find their own uniform, etc., which entails, of course, considerable expense.

was a tolerable singer, could drive four-in-hand, and play lawn-tennis.

Always studiously well-dressed, correct in every way, he copied his way of from the three or four snobs who set the fashion, reproduced other people's witticisms, learned anecdotes and jokes by heart, like a lesson, to use them again at small parties, constantly laughed, without knowing why his friends burst into roars of merriment, and was in the habit of keeping pretty girls for the pleasure of his best friends. Of course, he was a perfect fool, but after all, was a capital fellow, to whom it was only right to extend a good deal of indulgence.

When he had taken his thirty-first mistress, and had made the discovery that in love money does not create happiness two-thirds of the time, that they had all deceived him, and made him perfectly ridiculous at the end of a week, Charles Dupontel made up his mind to settle down as a respectable married man, and to marry not from calculation or from reason, but for love.

One autumn afternoon, at Auteuil, he noticed in front of the club stand among a number of pretty women who were standing round the braziers, a girl with such a lovely, delicate complexion that it looked like apple blossoms. Her hair was like threads of gold, and she was so slight and supple that she reminded him of those outlines of saints which one sees in old stained glass church windows. There was also something enigmatical about her, for she had the delightfully ingenuous look of a school-girl during the holidays, combined with the *sovoir faire* of some enlightened young lady, who already knows the how

and the why of everything, who is exuberant with youth and life, and who is eagerly waiting for the moment when her marriage will at length allow her to say and to do everything that comes into her head to amuse herself to satiety.

Then she had such small feet that they would have gone into a woman's hand, a waist that could have been clasped by a bracelet, turned-up eye-lashes, which fluttered like the wings of a butterfly, an impudent and saucy nose, and a vague mocking smile that made folds in her lips, like the petals of a rose.

Her father was a member of the Jockey Club. He was generally "cleaned," as they call it, in great races, but managed by his coolness and wit to keep himself afloat. He belonged to a race which could prove that his ancestors had been at the Court of Charlemagne, and not as musicians or cooks, as some people declared.

Her youth and beauty, and her father's pedigree, dazzled Dupontel, upset his brain, and altogether turned him upside down. The combination seemed to him to be a mirage of happiness and of pride of family.

He got introduced to her father at the end of a game of a *baccarat*, invited him to shoot with him, and a month later, as if it were an affair to be hurried over, he asked for and obtained the hand of Mademoiselle Thérèse de Montsaigne. Then he felt as happy as a miner who has discovered a vein of precious metal.

The young woman did not require more than twenty-four hours to discover that her husband was nothing but

a ridiculous puppet, and immediately set about to consider how she might best escape from her cage, and befool the poor fellow, who loved her with all his heart.

She deceived him without the least pity or the slightest scruple; she did it as from instinctive hatred, as if it were necessary for her not only to make him ridiculous, but also to forget that she ought to sacrifice her virgin dreams to him, to belong to him, and to submit to his hateful caresses without being able to repel him.

She was cruel, like all women are when they do not love, and delighted in doing audacious and absurd things, in visiting everything, and in braving danger. She seemed like a young colt intoxicated with the sun, the air, and its liberty, which gallops wildly across the meadows, jumps hedges and ditches, kicks, and whinnies joyously, and rolls about in the long, sweet grass.

But Dupontel remained quite imperturbable; he had not the slightest suspicion, and was the first to laugh when anybody told him some good story of a husband who had been cuckolded, although his wife repelled him, quarreled with him, and constantly pretended to be out of sorts or tired out, in order to escape from him. She seemed to take a malicious pleasure in checkmating him by her personal remarks, her disenchanting answers, and her apparent listlessness.

They saw a great deal of company, and he called himself Du Pontel now, even entertaining thoughts of buying a title from the Pope. He only read certain newspapers, kept up a regular cor-

respondence with the Orléans Princes, was thinking of starting a racing stable, and finished up by believing that he really was a fashionable man. He strutted about and was puffed out with conceit, having probably never read La Fontaine's fable of the ass that is laden with relics which people salute, and takes the bow himself.

Suddenly, however, anonymous letters disturbed his quietude, and tore the bandage from his eyes.

At first he tore them up without reading them, and shrugged his shoulders disdainfully; but he received so many of them, and the writers seemed so determined to dot his *i*'s and cross his *t*'s and to clear his brain for him, that the unhappy man began to grow disturbed, and to watch and to ferret about. He instituted minute inquiries, and arrived at the conclusion that he no longer had the right to make fun of other husbands—that he was the perfect counterpart of *Sganarelle*.*

Furious at having been duped, he set a whole private inquiry agency to work, continually acted a part, and one evening appeared unexpectedly with a commissary of police in the snug little bachelor's quarters which concealed his wife's escapades.

Thérèse, pale with terror and terribly frightened, at her wits' end at being thus surprised in all the disorder of her lover's apartments, hid herself behind the bed curtains, while he, who was an officer of dragoons, very much vexed at being mixed up in such a pinchbeck

*The *Cocu Imaginaire* (The Imaginary Cuckold), in Molière's play of that name.

scandal, and at being caught in a silk shirt by men who were so correctly dressed in frock coats, frowned angrily, and had to restrain himself from throwing his victim out of the window.

The police commissioner, who was calmly looking at this little scene with the coolness of experience, prepared to verify the fact that they were caught *in flagrante delictu*, and in an ironical

voice said to the husband, who had claimed his services:

"I must ask for your name in full, Monsieur?"

"Charles Joseph Edward Dupontel," was the answer. And as the commissary was writing it down from his dictation, he added suddenly: "Du Pontel in two words, if you please, Monsieur le Commissionnaire!"

Happiness

THE sky was blue, with light clouds that looked like swans slowly sailing on the waters of a lake, and the atmosphere was so warm, so saturated with the subtle odors of the mimosas, that Madame de Viellefont ordered coffee to be served on the terrace which overlooked the sea.

As the steam rose from the delicate china cups, one felt an almost inexpressible pleasure in watching the sails as they gradually disappeared in the mysterious distance. The almost motionless sea had the sheen of jewels and attracted the eyes like the looks of a dreamy woman.

Monsieur de Pardeillac, who had just arrived from Paris, fresh from the remembrance of the last election there, from that carnival of variegated posters which for weeks had imparted the strange aspect of an Oriental bazaar to the whole city, had just been relating the victory of "The General," and went on to say that those who had thought that the game was lost were beginning to hope again.

After listening to him, old Count de Lancolme, who had spent his whole life in rummaging libraries, and who had certainly annotated more manuscripts than any Benedictine friar, shook his bald head and exclaimed in his shrill, rather mocking voice:

"Will you allow me to tell you a very old story, which came into my head while you were speaking, my dear friend? I read it formerly in an old Italian city, though I forget at this moment where.

"It happened in the fifteenth century, which is far removed from our epoch, but you shall judge for yourselves whether it might not have happened yesterday.

"Since the day, when mad with rage and rebellion, the town had made a bonfire of the Ducal palace, and had ignominiously expelled the patrician who had been their *podestat** as if he had been some vicious scoundrel, had thrust his lovely daughter into a con-

*A Venetian or Genoese magistrate.

vent and had forced his sons, who might have claimed their parental heritage and have again imposed the abhorred yoke upon them, into a monastery, the town had never known any prosperous times. One after another, the shops closed, and money became as scarce as if some invasion of barbarian hordes had emptied the State Treasury and stolen the last gold coin.

"The poor people were in abject misery, and in vain held out their hands to passers-by under the church porches and in the squares. Only the watchmen disturbed the silence of the starlit nights, by the monotonous and melancholy call which announced the flight of the hours as they passed.

"There were no more serenades; no longer did viol and flute trouble the slumbers of the lover's choice; no longer were amorous arms thrown round women's supple waists, or bottles of red wine put to cool in the fountains under the trees. There were no more love adventures, to the rhythm of laughter and of kisses; nothing but heavy, monotonous weariness, and anxiety as to what the next day might bring forth, and ceaseless, unbridled ambitions and lusts.

"The palaces were deserted, one by one, as if the plague were raging, and the nobility had fled to Florence and to Rome. In the beginning, the common people, artisans and shopkeepers, had installed themselves in power, as in a conquered city, had seized posts of honor and well-paid offices, and had sacked the Treasury with their greedy and eager hands. After them came the middle classes, and these solemn upstarts and hypocrites, like leather bot-

ties blown out with wind, acting like tyrants and lying without the least shame, disowned their former promises, and would soon have given the finishing stroke to the unfortunate city, which was already on its last legs.

"Discontent was increasing, and the *sbirri** could scarcely find time to tear the seditious placards, posted up by unknown hands, from the walls.

"But now that the old *podestat* had died in exile, worn out with grief, and his children, brought up under monastic rule, were accustomed to nothing but prayer, and thought only of their own salvation, there was nobody to take his place.

"And so these kinglets profited by the occasion to strut about at their ease like nobles, to stuff themselves with luxurious meals, to increase their property by degrees, to put everything up for sale, and to get rid of those who, later on, would have called for accountings, and have nailed them to the pillory by their ears.

"Their arrogance knew no bounds, and when they were questioned about their acts, they only replied by menaces or raillery. This state of affairs lasted for twenty years, when, as war was imminent with Lucca, the Council raised troops and enrolled mercenaries. Several battles were fought, in which the enemy was beaten and was obliged to flee, abandoning their colors, their arms, prisoners, and all the booty in their camp.

"The man who led the soldiers to victory, whom they had acclaimed as a triumphant and laurel-crowned Caesar

*Italian police officers.

around their camp-fires, was a poor *condottiere*,* who possessed nothing in the world except his clothes, his buff jerkin, and his heavy sword.

"They called him 'Hercules,' on account of his strong muscles, his imposing build, and his large head, and also 'Malavista' because in battle he had no pity, no weakness, but seemed, with his great murderous arms, as if he had the long reach of death itself. He had neither title-deeds, fortune, nor relatives, for he had been born one night in the tent of a female camp follower. For a long time, an old broken drum had been his cradle, and he had grown up without knowing those maternal kisses and endearments that warm the heart, or the pleasure of sleeping on a soft bed, or of eating decent beef. He had known what it was to tighten his sword belt when luck had turned—like a weathercock when the wind shifts, and sometimes would gladly have given his share of the next booty for a mouldy crust of bread and a glass of water.

"He was a simple and brave man, whose heart was as virgin as some shore on which no human has ever yet left its imprint.

"The Chiefs of the Council were imprudent enough to summon Hercules Malavista within the walls of the town, and to celebrate his arrival with almost imperial splendor—more, however, to deceive the people and to regain their waning popularity by means of a ceremony copied from pagan Rome, than to honor and recompense the services of a soldier whom they despised at the bottom of their hearts.

"The bells rang a full peal, and the

archbishop and clergy and choir boys went to meet the Captain, singing psalms and hymns of joy, as if it were Easter. The streets and squares were strewn with branches of box, roses, and marjoram, while the meanest homes were decorated with flags and hung with drapery and rich stuffs.

"The conqueror came in through Trajan's gate, bare-headed, and with the symbolical golden laurel wreath on his head. Sitting on his horse, which was as black as a starless night, he appeared even taller, more vigorous and more masculine than he really was. He had a joyous and tranquil smile on his lips, and a hidden fire burning in his eyes. His soldiers bore flags and the trophies that he had gained before him, and behind him there was a noise of clashing partisans and crossbows, and of loud voices shouting *vivats* in his honor.

"In this fashion, he traversed all the quarters of the town, and even the suburbs. The women thought him handsome and proud, blew kisses to him, and held up their children so that they might see him, and he might touch them. The men cheered him, and looked at him with emotion, and many of them reflected and dreamed about this bright, unknown man, who appeared to be surrounded by a halo of glory.

"The members of the Council began to perceive the extent of the almost irreparable fault they had committed. They did not know what to do in order to ward off the danger by which they were menaced, and to rid

*An Italian mercenary or free-lance, in the Middle Ages.

themselves of a guest who was quite ready to become their master. They saw clearly that their hours were numbered, that they were approaching the fatal period at which rioting becomes imminent, and leaders are carried away like pieces of straw in a swift current.

"Hercules could not show himself in public without being received with shouts of acclamation and noisy greetings, and deputations from the nobility, as well as from the people, came repeatedly and told him that he had only to make a sign and to say a word, for his name to be in every mouth, and for his authority to be accepted. They begged him on their knees to accept the supreme authority, as though he would be conferring a favor on them, but the free-lance did not seem to understand them, and repelled their offers with the superb indifference of a soldier who has nothing to do with the people or a crown.

"At length, however, his resistance grew weaker; he felt the intoxication of power and grew accustomed to the idea of holding the lives of thousands in his hands, of having a palace, arsenals full of arms, chests full of gold, ships which he could send on adventurous cruises wherever he pleased, of governing that city, with all its houses and all its churches, and of being a leading figure at all grand functions in the cathedral.

"The shopkeepers and merchants were overcome by terror at the idea, and bowed before the shadow of the sword, which might sweep them all away and upset their false weights and scales. So they assembled secretly in a monastery of the Carmelite friars out-

side the gates of the city and a short time afterward the weaver Marconelli and the money changer Rippone brought Giaconda, who was one of the most beautiful courtesans in Venice, who knew every secret in the Art of Love, and whose kisses were a fore-taste of Paradise, back with them from that city. She soon managed to touch the soldier with her delicate, fair skin, to make him inhale its bewitching odor in close embrace, to dazzle him with her large, dark eyes, in which the reflection of stars seemed to shine, and when he had once tasted that feast of love, and drunk the heavy wine of kisses, when he had clasped that pink and white body in his arms, and had listened to a voice which sounded as soft as music and promised him eternities of joy and eternities of pleasures, Hercules lost his head, and forgot his dreams and his oaths.

"Why lose precious hours in conspiring, in deluding himself with chimeras; why risk his life when he loved and was loved—when the minutes were all too short to detach his lips from those of the woman he loved?

"And so he did whatever Giaconda demanded.

"They fled from the city, without even telling the sentinels who were on guard before his palace. They went far, far away as they could not find any retreat that was sufficiently unknown and hidden. At last they stopped at a small quiet fishing village, where there were gardens full of lemon trees, where the deserted beach looked as if it were covered with gold, and where the sea was a deep blue un-

til it was lost in the distance. And while the Captain and the courtesan loved each other and wore themselves out with pleasure—with the enchantment of the sea close to them—the irritated citizens whom he had left were clamoring for their idol, were indignant at his desertion, and tore up the

paving stones in the streets to hurl at the man who had betrayed their confidence and worship.

“So they pulled his statue down from its pedestal, amid spiteful songs and jokes, and the members of the Council breathed again, no longer afraid of Malavista’s great sword.”

Christmas Eve

THE Christmas-eve supper!* Oh! no, I shall never go in for that again!” Stout Henri Templier said that in a furious voice, as if some one had proposed some crime to him, while the others laughed and said:

“What are you flying into a rage about?”

“Because a Christmas-eve supper played me the dirtiest trick in the world, and ever since I have felt an insurmountable horror for that night of imbecile gaiety.”

“Tell us about it.”

“You want to know what it was? Very well then, just listen.

“You remember how cold it was two years ago at Christmas; cold enough to kill poor people in the streets. The Seine was covered with ice; the pavements froze one’s feet through the soles of one’s boots, and the whole world seemed to be at the point of congealing.

“I had a big piece of work on, and refused every invitation to supper, as I preferred to spend the night at my writing table. I dined alone and then began to work. But about ten o’clock

I grew restless at the thought of the gay and busy life all over Paris, at the noise in the streets which reached me in spite of everything, at my neighbors’ preparations for supper, which I heard through the walls. I hardly knew any longer what I was doing; I wrote nonsense, and at last I came to the conclusion that I had better give up all hope of producing any good work that night.

“I walked up and down my room; I sat down and got up again. I was certainly under the mysterious influence of the enjoyment outside, and I resigned myself to it. So I rang for my servant, and said to her:

“‘Angela, go and get a good supper for two; some oysters, a cold partridge, some crayfish, ham, and some cakes. Put out two bottles of champagne, lay the cloth and go to bed.’

“She obeyed in some surprise, and when all was ready, I put on my great-coat and went out. The great question remained: ‘Whom was I going to bring in to supper?’ My female friends had

*A great institution in France, and especially in Paris, at which black puddings are an indispensable dish.

all been invited elsewhere, and if I had wished to have one, I ought to have seen about it beforehand. So I thought that I would do a good action at the same time, and said to myself:

"Paris is full of poor and pretty girls who will have nothing on the table to-night, and who are on the lookout for some generous fellow. I will act the part of Providence to one of them this evening; and I will find one if I have to go to every pleasure resort and I will hunt till I find one to my choice. So I started off on my search.

"I certainly found many poor girls who were on the lookout for some adventure, but they were ugly enough to give a man a fit of indigestion, or thin enough to freeze in their tracks if they stopped, and you all know that I have a weakness for stout women. The more flesh they have, the better I like them, and a female colossus would be my ideal.

"Suddenly, opposite the 'Théâtre des Variétés,' I saw a figure to my liking. I trembled with pleasure, and said:

"By jove! What a fine girl!"

"It only remained for me to see her face, for a woman's face is the dessert.

"I hastened on, overtook her, and turned round suddenly under a gas lamp. She was charming, quite young, dark, with large, black eyes, and I immediately made my proposition which she accepted without any hesitation, and a quarter of an hour later we were sitting at supper in my lodgings. 'Oh! how comfortable it is here,' she said as she came in, and looked about her with evident satisfaction at having found a supper and a bed on that bitter night.

She was superb; so beautiful that she astonished me, and so stout that she fairly captivated me.

"She took off her cloak and hat, sat down and began to eat; but she seemed in low spirits, and sometimes her pale face twitched as if she were suffering from hidden sorrow.

"Have you anything troubling you?' I asked her.

"Bah! Don't let us think of troubles!"

"And she began to drink. She emptied her champagne glass at a draught, filled it again, and emptied it again, without stopping, and soon a little color came into her cheeks and she began to laugh.

"I adored her already, kissed her continually, and discovered that she was neither stupid, nor common, nor coarse as ordinary street-walkers are. I asked her for some details about her life, but she replied:

"My little fellow, that is no business of yours!' Alas! an hour later!

"At last it was time to retire, and while I was clearing the table, which had been laid in front of the fire, she undressed herself quickly, and got in. My neighbors were making a terrible din, singing and laughing like lunatics, and so I said to myself:

"I was quite right to go out and bring in this girl; I should never have been able to do any work.'

"At this moment, however, a deep groan made me look around, and I said:

"What is the matter with you, my dear?"

"She did not reply, but continued to utter painful sighs, as if she were suffering horribly, and I continued:

"Do you feel ill?" And suddenly she uttered a cry, a heartrending cry, and I rushed up to the bed, with a candle in my hand.

"Her face was distorted with pain, and she was wringing her hands, panting and uttering long, deep groans, which sounded like a rattle in the throat, and were painful to hear. I asked her in consternation:

"What is the matter with you? Do tell me what is the matter."

"Oh! the pain! the pain!" she said. I pulled up the bedclothes, and I saw, my friends, that she was in labor.

"Then I lost my head, and ran and knocked at the wall with my fists, shouting: 'Help! help!'"

"My door was opened almost immediately, and a crowd of people came in, men in evening clothes, women in full dress, harlequins, Turks, musketeers, and the inroad startled me so, that I could not explain myself, while they who had thought that some accident had happened or that a crime had been committed, could not understand what was the matter. At last, however, I managed to say:

"This—this—woman—is being confined."

"Then they looked at her, and gave their opinion. A frair, especially, declared that he knew all about it, and wished to assist nature, but as they were all as drunk as pigs I was afraid that they would kill her. So I rushed downstairs without my hat, to fetch an old doctor, who lived in the next street. When I came back with him, the whole house was up; the gas on the stairs had been relighted, the lodgers from every floor were in my

room, while four boatmen were finishing my champagne and cray-fish.

"As soon as they saw me they raised a loud shout. A milkmaid presented me with a horrible little wrinkled specimen of humanity, that was mewling like a cat, and said to me:

"It is a girl."

"The doctor examined the woman, declared that she was in a dangerous state, as the event had occurred immediately after supper, and took his leave, saying he would immediately send a sick nurse and a wet nurse. An hour later, the two women came, bringing all that was requisite with them.

"I spent the night in my armchair, too distracted to be able to think of the consequences, and almost as soon as it was light the doctor came again. He found his patient very ill, and said to me:

"Your wife, Monsieur—"

"She is not my wife," I interrupted him.

"Very well then, your mistress; it does not matter to me."

"He told me what must be done for her, what her diet must be, and then wrote a prescription.

"What was I to do? Could I send the poor creature to the hospital? I should have been looked upon as a brute in the house and in all the neighborhood. So I kept her in my rooms, and she had my bed for six weeks.

"I sent the child to some peasants at Poissy to be taken care of, and she still costs me fifty francs* a month, for as I had paid at first, I shall be

*\$10.

obliged to go on paying as long as I live. Later on, she will believe that I am her father. But to crown my misfortunes, when the girl had recovered, I found that she was in love with me, madly in love with me, the baggage!"

"Well?"

"Well, she had grown as thin as a

homeless cat, and I turned the skeleton out of doors. But she watches for me in the streets, hides herself, so that she may see me pass, stops me in the evening when I go out, in order to kiss my hand, and, in fact, worries me enough to drive me mad. That is why I never keep Christmas eve now."

The Awakening

DURING the three years that she had been married, she had not left the Val de Ciré, where her husband possessed two cotton-mills. She led a quiet life, and, although without children, she was quite happy in her house among the trees, which the work-people called the "château."

Although Monsieur Vasseur was considerably older than she was, he was very kind. She loved him, and no guilty thought had ever entered her mind.

Her mother came and spent every summer at Ciré, and then returned to Paris for the winter, as soon as the leaves began to fall.

Jeanne coughed a little every autumn, for the narrow valley through which the river wound was very foggy for five months in the year. First of all, slight mists hung over the meadows, making all the low-lying ground look like a large pond, out of which the roofs of the houses rose. Then a white vapor, which rose like a tide, enveloped everything, turning the valley into a phantom land, through which men moved like ghosts, without recognizing each other ten yards off, and the trees.

wreathed in mist and dripping with moisture, rose up through it.

But the people who went along the neighboring hills, and looked down upon the deep, white depression of the valley, saw the two huge chimneys of Monsieur Vasseur's factories rising above the mist below. Day and night they vomited forth two long trails of black smoke, the sole indication that people were living in the hollow, which looked as if it were filled with a cloud of cotton.

That year, when October came, the medical men advised the young woman to go and spend the winter in Paris with her mother, as the air of the valley was dangerous for her weak chest, and she went. For a month or so, she thought continually of the house which she had left, the home to which she seemed rooted, the well-known furniture and quiet ways of which she loved so much. But by degrees she grew accustomed to her new life, and got to like entertainments, dinner and evening parties, and balls.

Till then she had retained her girlish

manners, had been undecided and rather sluggish, walked languidly, and had a tired smile, but now she became animated and merry, and was always ready for pleasure. Men paid her marked attentions, and she was amused at their talk and made fun of their gallantries, as she felt sure that she could resist them, for she was rather disgusted with love from what she had learned of it in marriage.

The idea of giving up her body to the coarse caresses of such bearded creatures made her laugh with pity and shudder a little with ignorance.

She asked herself how women could consent to degrading contacts with strangers, the more so as they were already obliged to endure them with their legitimate husbands. She would have loved her husband much more if they had lived together like two friends, and had restricted themselves to chaste kisses, which are the caresses of the scul.

But she was much amused by their compliments, by the desire which showed itself in their eyes, a desire she did not share, by declarations of love whispered into her ear as they were returning to the drawing-room after some grand dinner, by words murmured so low that she almost had to guess them, words which left her blood quite cool, and her heart untouched, while gratifying her unconscious coquetry, kindling a flame of pleasure within her, making her lips open, her eyes grow bright, and her woman's heart, to which homage was due, quiver with delight.

She was fond of those *tête-à-têtes* in the dusk, when a man grows pressing,

hesitates, trembles and falls on his knees. It was a delicious and new pleasure to her to know that they felt a passion which left her quite unmoved, able to say *no* by a shake of the head and by pursing her lips, able to withdraw her hands, to get up and calmly ring for lights, and to see the man who had been trembling at her feet get up, confused and furious when he heard the footman coming.

She often uttered a hard laugh, which froze the most burning words, and said harsh things, which fell like a jet of icy water on the most ardent protestations, while the intonations of her voice were enough to make any man who really loved her kill himself. There were two especially who made obstinate love to her, although they did not at all resemble one another.

One of them, Paul Péronel, was a tall man of the world, gallant and enterprising, a man who was accustomed to successful love affairs, one who knew how to wait, and when to seize his opportunity.

The other, Monsieur d'Avancelle, quivered when he came near her, scarcely ventured to express his love, but followed her like a shadow, and gave utterance to his hopeless desire by distracted looks, and the assiduity of his attentions to her. She made him a kind of servant and treated him as if he had been her slave.

She would have been much amused if anybody had told her that she would love him, and yet she did love him, after a singular fashion. As she saw him continually, she had grown accustomed to his voice, to his gestures, and to his manner, just as one grows accustomed

to those with whom one meets continually. Often his face haunted her in her dreams, and she saw him as he really was; gentle, delicate in all his actions, humble, but passionately in love. She would awake full of these dreams, fancying that she still heard him and felt him near her, until one night (most likely she was feverish) she saw herself alone with him in a small wood, where they were both sitting on the grass. He was saying charming things to her, while he pressed and kissed her hands. She could feel the warmth of his skin and of his breath and she was stroking his hair in a very natural manner.

We are quite different in our dreams to what we are in real life. She felt full of love for him, full of calm and deep love, and was happy in stroking his forehead and in holding him against her. Gradually he put his arms around her, kissed her eyes and her cheeks without her attempting to get away from him; their lips met, and she yielded.

When she saw him again, unconscious of the agitation that he had caused her, she felt that she grew red, and while he was telling her of his love, she was continually recalling to mind their previous meeting, without being able to get rid of the recollection.

She loved him, loved him with refined tenderness, chiefly from the remembrance of her dream, although she dreaded the accomplishment of the desires which had arisen in her mind.

At last he perceived it, and then she told him everything, even to the dread of his kisses, and she made him swear that he would respect her, and he did so. They spent long hours of transcendental

love together, during which their souls alone embraced, and when they separated, they were enervated, weak, and feverish.

Sometimes their lips met, and with closed eyes they reveled in that long, yet chaste caress. She felt, however, that he could not resist much longer, and as she did not wish to yield, she wrote and told her husband that she wanted to come to him, and to return to her tranquil, solitary life. But in reply, he wrote her a very kind letter, and strongly advised her not to return in the middle of the winter, and so expose herself to the sudden change of climate, and to the icy mists of the valley, and she was thunderstruck and angry with that confiding man, who did not guess, who did not understand, the struggles of her heart.

February was a warm, bright month, and although she now avoided being alone with Monsieur Avancelle, she sometimes accepted his invitation to drive round the lake in the Bois de Boulogne with him, when it was dusk.

On one of those evenings, it was so warm that it seemed as if the sap in every tree and plant were rising. Their cab was going at a walk; it was growing dusk, and they were sitting close together, holding each other's hands, and she said to herself:

"It is all over, I am lost!" for she felt her desires rising in her again, the imperious demand for that supreme embrace which she had undergone in her dream. Every moment their lips sought each other, clung together, and separated, only to meet again immediately.

He did not venture to go into the

house with her, but left her at her door, more in love with him than ever, and half fainting.

Monsieur Paul Péronel was waiting for her in the little drawing-room, without a light, and when he shook hands with her, he felt how feverish she was. He began to talk in a low, tender voice, lulling her tired mind with the charm of amorous words.

She listened to him without replying, for she was thinking of the other; she thought she was listening to the other, and thought she felt him leaning against her, in a kind of hallucination. She saw only him, and did not remember that any other man existed on earth, and when her ears trembled at those three syllables: "I love you," it was he, the other man, who uttered them, who kissed her hands, who strained her to his breast like the other had done shortly before in the cab. It was he who pressed victorious kisses on her lips, it was he whom she held in her arms and embraced, to whom she was calling, with all the longings of her heart, with all the overwrought ardor of her body.

When she awoke from her dream, she uttered a terrible cry. Paul Péronel was kneeling by her and was thanking her passionately, while he covered her disheveled hair with kisses, and she al-

most screamed out: "Go away! go away! go away!"

And as he did not understand what she meant, and tried to put his arm round her waist again, she writhed, as she stammered out:

"You are a wretch, and I hate you! Go away! go away!" And he got up in great surprise, took up his hat and went.

The next day she returned to Val de Ciré, and her husband, who had not expected her for some time, blamed her for her freak.

"I could not live away from you any longer," she said.

He found her altered in character and sadder than formerly, but when he said to her: "What is the matter with you? You seem unhappy. What do you want?" she replied:

"Nothing. Happiness exists only in our dreams in this world."

Avancelle came to see her the next summer, and she received him without any emotion and without regret, for she suddenly perceived that she had never loved him, except in a dream, from which Paul Péronel had brutally roused her.

But the young man, who still adored her, thought as he returned to Paris:

"Women are really very strange, complicated, and inexplicable beings."

The White Lady

FORTUNA, goddess of chance and good luck, has always been Cupid's best ally, and Arnold T., who was a lieutenant in

a hussar regiment, was evidently a special favorite of both deities.

This good-looking, well-bred young

officer had been an enthusiastic admirer of the two Countesses W., mother and daughter, during a tolerably long leave of absence, which he spent with his relations in Vienna. He had admired them in the Prater, had worshipped them at the opera, but he had never had an opportunity of making their acquaintance, and when he was back at his dull quarters in Galicia, he liked to think about those two aristocratic beauties. Last summer his regiment was transferred to Bohemia, to a wildly romantic district, which has been made illustrious by a talented writer. It abounds in magnificent woods, lofty mountain-forests, and castles, and is a favorite summer resort of the neighboring aristocracy.

Who can describe his joyful surprise when he and his men were quartered in an old, weatherbeaten castle in the middle of a wood, and he learned from the house-steward who received him that the owner of the castle was the husband, and, consequently, also the father of his Viennese ideals. An hour after he had taken possession of his old-fashioned but beautifully furnished room in a side-wing of the castle, he put on his full-dress uniform, and throwing his dolman over his shoulders went to pay his respects to the Count and the ladies.

He was received with the greatest cordiality. The Count was delighted to have a companion when he went out shooting, and the ladies were no less pleased at having some one to accompany them on their walks in the forests, or on their rides, so that he felt only half on the earth and half in the seventh heaven of Mohammedan bliss. Before supper he found time to inspect the

house more closely, and even to take a sketch of the large, gloomy building from a favorable point. The ancient seat of the Counts of W. was really very gloomy. The walls, which were crumbling away here and there, were covered with dark ivy; the round towers harbored jackdaws, owls, and hawks; an Æolian harp complained and sighed and wept in the wind; the stones in the castle yard were overgrown with grass; the cloisters re-echoed to every footstep; great ancestral portraits hung on the walls, coated as it were with dark, mysterious veils by the centuries which had passed over them. All this recalled to him the legends and fairy tales of his youth, and he involuntarily thought of the "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" and of "Blue Beard," of the cruel mistress of the Kynast,* and of that aristocratic tigress of the Carpathians, who obtained the unfading charm of eternal youth by bathing in human blood.

He came in to supper, where he found himself for the first time in the company of all the members of the family, just in the frame of mind that was suitable for ghost stories, and was not a little surprised when his host told him, half smiling and half seriously, that the "White Lady" was disturbing the

*A castle, now a well-preserved ruin, in the Giant Mountains in N. Germany. The legend is that its mistress, Kuni-gerude, vowed to marry nobody except the Knight who should ride round the parapet of the castle, and many perished in the attempt. At last one of them succeeded in performing the feat, but he merely sternly rebuked her, and took his leave. He was accompanied by his wife, disguised as his page, according to some versions of the legend.

castle again, and that she had latterly been seen very often.

"Yes, indeed," Countess Ida exclaimed, "you must take care, Baron, for she haunts the very wing where your room is."

The hussar was just in the frame of mind to take the matter seriously, but, on the other hand, when he saw the dark, ardent eyes of the Countess, and then the merry blue eyes of her daughter, fixed on him, any real fear of ghosts was quite out of the question with him. For Baron T. feared nothing in this world, but he possessed a very lively imagination, which could conjure up threatening forms from another world so plainly that sometimes he felt very uncomfortable at his own fancies. But on the present occasion the malicious apparition had no power over him; the ladies took care of that, for both of them were beautiful and amiable.

The Countess was a mature Venus of thirty-six, of middle height, with bright eyes, thick dark hair, beautiful white teeth, and with the voluptuous figure of a true Viennese, while her daughter, Ida, who was seventeen, had light hair, the pert little nose of the china figures of shepherdesses in the dress of the period of Louis XIV., and was short, slim, and full of French grace. Besides them and the Count, a son of twelve and his tutor were present at supper. It struck the hussar as strange that the tutor, who was a strongly-built young man, with a winning face and those refined manners which the greatest plebeian quickly acquires when brought into close and constant contact with the aristocracy, was treated with great consideration by all the fam-

ily except the Countess, who treated him very haughtily. She assumed a particularly imperious manner toward her son's tutor, and she either found fault with, or made fun of, everything that he did, while he put up with it all with smiling humility.

Before supper was over their conversation again turned on the ghost, and Baron T. asked whether they did not possess a picture of the White Lady.

"Of course we have one," they all replied at once; whereupon Baron T. begged to be allowed to see it.

"I will show it to you to-morrow," the Count said.

"No, papa, now, immediately," the younger lady said mockingly; "just before the ghostly hour, such a thing creates a much greater impression."

All who were present, not excepting the boy and his tutor, took a candle. Then they walked, as if in a torchlight procession, to the wing of the house where the hussar's room was. There was a life-size picture of the White Lady hanging in a Gothic passage near his room, among other ancestral portraits, and it by no means made a terrible impression on anyone who looked at it, but rather the contrary. The ghost, dressed in stiff, gold brocade and purple velvet, and with a hawk on her wrist, looked like one of those seductive Amazons of the fifteenth century who knew the art of laying men and game at their feet with equal skill.

"Don't you think that the White Lady is very like mamma?" Countess Ida said, interrupting the Baron's silent contemplation of the picture.

"There is no doubt of it," the hussar replied, while the Countess smiled

and the tutor turned red. They were still standing before the picture, when a strong gust of wind suddenly extinguished all the lights, and they all uttered a simultaneous cry.

"The White Lady," the little Count whispered, but she did not come, and as it was luckily a moonlight night, they soon recovered from their momentary shock. The family retired to their apartments, while the hussar and the tutor went to their own rooms, which were situated in the wing of the castle which was haunted by the White Lady; the officer's apartment being scarcely thirty yards from the portrait, while the tutor's was rather further down the corridor.

The hussar went to bed, and was soon fast asleep, and though he had rather uneasy dreams nothing further happened. But while they were at breakfast the next morning, the Count's body-servant told them, with every appearance of real terror, that as he was crossing the courtyard at midnight, he had suddenly heard a noise like bats in the open cloisters, and when he looked he distinctly saw the White Lady gliding slowly through them. But they merely laughed at the poltroon, and though our hussar laughed also, he fully made up his mind, without saying a word about it, to keep a lookout for the ghost that night.

Again they had supper alone, without any company, had some music and pleasant talk, and separated at half past eleven. The hussar, however, only went to his room for form's sake; he loaded his pistols, and when all was quiet in the castle, he crept down into the court-

yard and took up his position behind a pillar which was quite hidden in the shade, while the moon, which was nearly at the full, flooded the cloisters with its clear, pale light.

There were no lights to be seen in the castle except from two windows, which were those of the Countess's apartments, and soon they were also extinguished. The clock struck twelve, and the hussar could scarcely breathe from excitement; the next moment, however, he heard the noise which the Count's body-servant had compared to that of bats, and almost at the same instant a white figure glided slowly through the open cloisters and passed so close to him, that it almost made his blood curdle. Then it disappeared in the wing of the castle which he and the tutor occupied.

The officer, who was usually so brave, stood as though he was paralyzed for a few moments. But then he took heart, and feeling determined to make the nearer acquaintance of the spectral beauty, he crept softly up the broad staircase and took up his position in a deep recess in the cloisters, where nobody could see him.

He waited for a long time; he heard every quarter strike, and at last, just before the close of the "witching hour," he heard the same noise like the rustling of bats, and then she came. He felt the flutter of her white dress, and she stood before him—it was indeed the Countess.

He presented his pistol at her as he challenged her, but she raised her hand menacingly.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed. "If you are really a ghost, prove it, for I am going to fire."

"For heaven's sake!" the White Lady whispered, and at the same instant two white arms were thrown round him, and he felt a full, warm bosom heaving against his own.

After that night the ghost appeared more frequently still. Not only did the White Lady make her appearance every night in the cloisters, only to disappear in the proximity of the hussar's rooms as long as the family remained at

the castle, but she even followed them to Vienna.

Baron T., who went to that capital on leave of absence during the following winter, and who was the Count's guest at the express wish of his wife, was frequently told by the footman that although hitherto she had seemed to be confined to the old castle in Bohemia, she had shown herself now here, now there, in the mansion in Vienna, in a white dress making a noise like the wings of a bat, and bearing a striking resemblance to the beautiful Countess.

Madame Baptiste

WHEN I went into the waiting-room at the station at Loubain, the first thing I did was to look at the clock, and I found that I had two hours and ten minutes to wait for the Paris express.

I felt suddenly tired, as if I had walked twenty miles. Then I looked about me, as if I could find some means of killing the time on the station walls. At last I went out again, and halted outside the gates of the station, racking my brains to find something to do. The street, which was a kind of boulevard planted with acacias, between two rows of houses of unequal shape and different styles of architecture, houses such as one only sees in a small town, ascended a slight hill, and at the extreme end of it there were some trees, as if it ended in a park.

From time to time a cat crossed the street, and jumped over the gutters, carefully. A cur sniffed at every tree,

and hunted for fragments from the kitchens, but I did not see a single human being. I felt listless and disheartened. What could I do with myself? I was already thinking of the inevitable and interminable visit to the small *café* at the railway station, where I should have to sit over a glass of undrinkable beer, and an illegible newspaper, when I saw a funeral procession coming out of a side street into the one in which I was, and the sight of the hearse was a relief to me. It would, at any rate, give me something to do for ten minutes.

Suddenly, however, my curiosity was aroused. The corpse was followed by eight gentlemen, one of whom was weeping, while the others were chatting together. But there was no priest, and I thought to myself: "This is a non-religious funeral," but then I reflected that a town like Loubain must contain

at least a hundred freethinkers, who would have made a point of making a manifestation. What could it be then? The rapid pace of the procession clearly proved that the body was to be buried without ceremony, and, consequently, without the intervention of religion.

My idle curiosity framed the most complicated suppositions, and as the hearse passed a strange idea struck me, which was to follow it with the eight gentlemen. That would take up my time for an hour, at least, and I, accordingly, walked with the others, with a sad look on my face, and on seeing this, the two last turned round in surprise, and then spoke to each other in a low voice.

No doubt, they were asking each other whether I belonged to the town, and then they consulted the two in front of them, who stared at me in turn. The close attention they paid me annoyed me, and to put an end to it, I went up to them, and after bowing, said:

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for interrupting your conversation, but seeing a civil funeral, I have followed it, although I did not know the deceased gentleman whom you are accompanying."

"It is a woman," one of them said.

I was much surprised at hearing this, and asked:

"But it is a civil funeral, is it not?"

The other gentleman, who evidently wished to tell me all about it, then said: "Yes and no. The clergy have refused to allow us the use of the church."

On hearing that, I uttered a prolonged *A—h!* of astonishment. I could not understand it at all, but my obliging neighbor continued:

"It is rather a long story. This young woman committed suicide, and that is the reason why she cannot be buried with any religious ceremony. The gentleman who is walking first, and who is crying, is her husband."

I replied, with some hesitation:

"You surprise and interest me very much, Monsieur. Shall I be indiscreet if I ask you to tell me the facts of the case? If I am troubling you, think that I have said nothing about the matter."

The gentleman took my arm familiarly.

"Not at all, not at all. Let us stop a little behind the others, and I will tell it to you, although it is a very sad story. We have plenty of time before getting to the cemetery, whose trees you see up yonder, for it is a stiff pull up this hill."

And he began:

"This young woman, Madame Paul Hamot, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant in the neighborhood, Monsieur Fontanelle. When she was a mere child of eleven, she had a terrible adventure; a footman violated her. She nearly died, in consequence, and the wretch's brutality betrayed him. A terrible criminal case was the result, and as it was proved that for three months the poor young martyr had been the victim of that brute's disgraceful practices, he was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

"The little girl grew up, stigmatized by her disgrace, isolated, without any companions, and grownup people would scarcely kiss her, for they thought they would soil their lips if they touched her forehead. She became a sort of monster, a phenomenon to all the town.

People said to each other in a whisper: "You know little Fontanelle," and everybody turned away in the streets when she passed. Her parents could not even get a nurse to take her out for a walk, and the other servants held aloof from her, as if contact with her would poison everybody who came near her.

"It was pitiable to see the poor child when the brats played every afternoon. She remained quite by herself, standing by her maid, and looking at the other children amusing themselves. Sometimes, yielding to an irresistible desire to mix with the other children, she advanced, timidly, with nervous gestures, and mingled with a group, with furtive steps, as if conscious of her own infamy. And immediately the mothers, aunts, and nurses used to come running from every seat, taking the children intrusted to their care by the hand and dragging them brutally away.

"Little Fontanelle would remain isolated, wretched, without understanding what it meant, and then would begin to cry, heartbroken with grief, and to run and hide her head in her nurse's lap, sobbing.

"As she grew up, it was worse still. They kept the girls from her, as if she were stricken with the plague. Remember that she had nothing to learn, nothing; that she no longer had the right to the symbolical wreath of orange-flowers; that almost before she could read, she had penetrated that redoubtable mystery which mothers scarcely allow their daughters to guess, trembling as they enlighten them on the night of their marriage.

"When she went through the streets, always accompanied by a governess—as

if her parents feared some fresh, terrible adventure—with her eyes cast down under the load of that mysterious disgrace which she felt was always weighing upon her, the other girls, who were not nearly so innocent as people thought, whispered and giggled as they looked at her knowingly, and immediately turned their heads absently if she happened to look at them. People scarcely greeted her; only a few men bowed to her, and the mothers pretended not to see her, while some young blackguards called her "Madame Baptiste," after the name of the footman who had outraged and ruined her.

"Nobody knew the secret torture of her mind for she hardly ever spoke and never laughed; her parents themselves appeared uncomfortable in her presence, as if they bore her a constant grudge for some irreparable fault.

"An honest man would not willingly give his hand to a liberated convict, would he, even if that convict were his own son? And Monsieur and Madame Fontanelle looked on their daughter as they would have done on a son who had just been released from the hulks. She was pretty and pale, tall, slender, distinguished-looking, and she would have pleased me very much, Monsieur, but for that unfortunate affair.

"Well, when a new sub-prefect was appointed here eighteen months ago, he brought his private secretary with him. He was a queer sort of fellow, who had lived in the Latin Quarter,* it appears. He saw Mademoiselle Fontanelle, and fell in love with her, and when told of

*The students' quarter in Paris, where many of them lead fast lives.

what occurred, he merely said: 'Bah! That is just a guarantee for the future, and I would rather it should have happened before I married her, than afterward. I shall sleep tranquilly with that woman.'

"He paid his addresses to her, asked for her hand, and married her, and then, not being deficient in boldness, he paid wedding-calls,* as if nothing had happened. Some people returned them, others did not, but at last the affair began to be forgotten and she took her proper place in society.

"She adored her husband as if he had been a god, for you must remember that he had restored her to honor and to social life, that he had braved public opinion, faced insults, and, in a word, performed a courageous act, such as few men would accomplish, and she felt the most exalted and unceasing love for him.

"When she became pregnant, and it was known, the most particular people and the greatest sticklers opened their doors to her, as if she had been definitely purified by maternity.

"It is funny, but true, and thus everything was going on as well as possible, when, the other day, occurred the feast of the patron saint of our town. The prefect, surrounded by his staff and the authorities, presided at the musical competition, and when he had finished his speech, the distribution of medals began, which Paul Hamot, his private secretary, handed to those who were entitled to them.

"As you know, there are always jealousies and rivalries, which make people

*In France and Germany, the newly-married couple pay the wedding-calls, which is the reverse of our custom.

forget all propriety. All the ladies of the town were there on the platform, and, in his proper turn, the bandmaster from the village of Mourmillon came up. This band was only to receive a second-class medal, for you cannot give first-class medals to everybody, can you? But when the private secretary handed him his badge, the man threw it in his face and exclaimed:

"'You may keep your medal for Baptiste. You owe him a first-class one, also, just as you do me.'

There were a number of people there who began to laugh. The common herd are neither charitable nor refined, and every eye was turned toward that poor lady. Have you ever seen a woman going mad, Monsieur? Well, we were present at the sight! She got up, and fell back on her chair three times in succession, as if she wished to make her escape, but saw that she could not make her way through the crowd. Then another voice in the crowd exclaimed:

"'Oh! Oh! Madame Baptiste!'

"And a great uproar, partly laughter and partly indignation, arose. The word was repeated over and over again; people stood on tiptoe to see the unhappy woman's face; husbands lifted their wives up in their arms so that they might see her, and people asked.

"'Which is she? The one in blue?'

"The boys crowed like cocks and laughter was heard all over the place.

"She did not move now on her state chair, just as if she had been put there for the crowd to look at. She could not move, nor disappear, nor hide her face. Her eyelids blinked quickly, as if a vivid light were shining in her face,

and she panted like a horse that is going up a steep hill, so that it almost broke one's heart to see it. Meanwhile, however, Monsieur Hamot had seized the ruffian by the throat, and they were rolling on the ground together, amid a scene of indescribable confusion, and the ceremony was interrupted.

"An hour later, as the Hamots were returning home, the young woman, who had not uttered a word since the insult, but who was trembling as if all her nerves had been set in motion by springs, suddenly sprang on the parapet of the bridge, and threw herself into the river, before her husband could prevent it. The water is very deep under the arches, and it was two hours before her body was recovered. Of course, she was dead."

The narrator stopped, and then added:

"It was, perhaps, the best thing she could do in her position. There are some

things which cannot be wiped out, and now you understand why the clergy refused to have her taken into church. Ah! If it had been a religious funeral, the whole town would have been present, but you can understand that her suicide, added to the other affair, made families abstain from attending her funeral. And then, it is not an easy matter, here, to attend a funeral which is performed without religious rites."

We passed through the cemetery gates, and I waited, much moved by what I had heard, until the coffin had been lowered into the grave before I went up to the poor husband, who was sobbing violently, to press his hand vigorously. He looked at me in surprise through his tears, and said:

"Thank you, Monsieur."

I was not sorry that I had followed the funeral.

Revenge

As they were still speaking of Pranzini, M. Maloureau, who had been Attorney-General under the Empire, said:

"I knew another case like that, a very curious affair, curious from many points, as you shall see.

"I was at that time Imperial attorney in the province, and stood very well at Court, thanks to my father, who was first President at Paris. I had charge of a still celebrated case, called 'The Affair of Schoolmaster Moiron.'

"M. Moiron, a schoolmaster in the north of France, bore an excellent reputation in all the country thereabout. He

was an intelligent, reflective, very religious man, and had married in the district of Boislinot, where he practiced his profession. He had had three children, who all died in succession from weak lungs. After the loss of his own little ones, he seemed to lavish upon the urchins confided to his care all the tenderness concealed in his heart. He bought, with his own pennies, playthings for his best pupils, the diligent and good. He allowed them to have play dinners, and gorged them with dainties of candies and cakes. Everybody loved and praised this brave man, this brave

heart, and it was like a blow when five of his pupils died of the same disease that had carried off his children. It was believed that an epidemic prevailed, caused by the water being made impure from drought. They looked for the cause, without discovering it, more than they did at the symptoms, which were very strange. The children appeared to be taken with a languor, could eat nothing, complained of pains in the stomach, and finally died in most terrible agony.

"An autopsy was made of the last to die, but nothing was discovered. The entrails were sent to Paris and analyzed, but showed no sign of any toxic substance.

"For one year no further deaths occurred; then two little boys, the best pupils in the class, favorites of father Moiron, expired in four days' time. An examination was ordered, and in each body fragments of pounded glass were found imbedded in the organs. They concluded that the two children had eaten imprudently of something carelessly prepared. Sufficient broken glass remained in the bottom of a bowl of milk to have caused this frightful accident, and the matter would have rested there had not Moiron's servant been taken ill in the interval. The physician found the same morbid signs that he observed in the preceding attacks of the children, and, upon questioning her, finally obtained the confession that she had stolen and eaten some bonbons, bought by the master for his pupils.

"Upon order of the court, the schoolhouse was searched and a closet was found, full of sweetmeats and dainties for the children. Nearly all these edi-

bles contained fragments of glass or broken needles.

"Moiron was immediately arrested. He was so indignant and stupefied at the weight of suspicion upon him that he was nearly overcome. Nevertheless, the indications of his guilt were so apparent that they fought hard in my mind against my first conviction, which was based upon his good reputation, his entire life of truthfulness, and the absolute absence of any motive for such a crime.

"Why should this good, simple religious man kill children, and the children whom he seemed to love best? Why should he select those he had feasted with dainties, for whom he had spent in playthings and bonbons half his stipend?

"To admit this, it must be concluded that he was insane. But Moiron seemed so reasonable, so calm, so full of judgment and good sense! It was impossible to prove insanity in him.

"Proofs accumulated, nevertheless! Bonbons, cakes, *pâtés* of marshmallow, and other things seized at the shops where the schoolmaster got his supplies, were found to contain no suspected fragment.

"He pretended that some unknown enemy had opened his closet with a false key and placed the glass and needles in the eatables. And he implied a story of heritage dependent on the death of a child, sought out and discovered by a peasant, and so worked up as to make the suspicion fall upon the schoolmaster. This brute, he said, was not interested in the other poor children who had to die also.

"This theory was plausible. The man appeared so sure of himself and so

pitiful, that we should have acquitted him without doubt, if two overwhelming discoveries had not been made at one blow. The first was a snuffbox full of ground glass! It was his own snuffbox, in a secret drawer of his secretary, where he kept his money.

"He explained this in a manner not acceptable, by saying that it was the last ruse of an unknown guilty one. But a merchant of Saint-Marlout presented himself at the house of the judge, telling him that Moiron had bought needles of him many times, the finest needles he could find, breaking them to see whether they suited him.

"The merchant brought as witnesses a dozen persons who recognized Moiron at first glance. And the inquest revealed the fact that the schoolmaster was at Saint-Marlout on the days designated by the merchant.

"I pass over the terrible depositions of the children upon the master's choice of dainties, and his care in making the little ones eat in his presence and destroying all traces of the feast.

"Public opinion, exasperated, recalled capital punishment, and took on a new force from terror which permitted no delays or resistance.

"Moiron was condemned to death. His appeal was rejected. No recourse remained to him for pardon. I knew from my father that the Emperor would not grant it.

"One morning, as I was at work in my office, the chaplain of the prison was announced. He was an old priest who had a great knowledge of men and a large acquaintance among criminals. He appeared troubled and constrained. After talking a few moments of other

things, he said abruptly, on rising:

"'If Moiron is decapitated, Monsieur Attorney-General, you will have allowed the execution of an innocent man.'

"Then, without bowing, he went on, leaving me under the profound effect of his words. He had pronounced them in a solemn, affecting fashion, opening lips, closed and sealed by confession, in order to save a life.

"An hour later I was on my way to Paris, and my father, at my request, asked an immediate audience with the Emperor.

"I was received the next day. Napoleon III. was at work in a little room when we were introduced. I exposed the whole affair, even to the visit of the priest, and, in the midst of the story, the door opened behind the chair of the Emperor, and the Empress, who believed him alone, entered. His Majesty consulted her. When she had run over the facts, she exclaimed:

"'This man must be pardoned! He must, because he is innocent.'

"Why should this sudden conviction of a woman so pious throw into my mind a terrible doubt?

"Up to that time I had ardently desired a commutation of the sentence. And now I felt myself the puppet, the dupe of a criminal ruse, which had employed the priest and the confession as a means of defense.

"I showed some hesitation to their Majesties. The Emperor remained undecided, solicited on one hand by his natural goodness, and on the other held back by the fear of allowing himself to play a miserable part; but the Empress, convinced that the priest had obeyed a divine call, repeated: 'What does it

matter? It is better to spare a guilty man than to kill an innocent one.' Her advice prevailed. The penalty of death was commuted, and that of hard labor was substituted.

"Some years after I heard that Moiron, whose exemplary conduct at Toulon had been made known again to the Emperor, was employed as a domestic by the director of the penitentiary. And then I heard no word of this man for a long time.

"About two years after this, when I was passing the summer at the house of my cousin, De Larielle, a young priest came to me one evening, as we were sitting down to dinner, and wished to speak to me.

"I told them to let him come in, and he begged me to go with him to a dying man, who desired, before all else, to see me. This had happened often, during my long career as judge, and, although I had been put aside by the Republic, I was still called upon from time to time in like circumstances.

"I followed the ecclesiastic, who made me mount into a little miserable lodging, under the roof of a high house. There, upon a pallet of straw, I found a dying man, seated with his back against the wall, in order to breathe. He was a sort of grimacing skeleton, with deep, shining eyes.

"When he saw me he murmured: 'You do not know me?'

"'No.'

"'I am Moiron.'

"I shivered, but said: 'The school-master?'

"'Yes.'

"'How is it you are here?'

"'That would be too long—I haven't

time—I am going to die—They brought me this curate—and as I knew you were here, I sent him for you—It is to you that I wish to confess—since you saved my life before—the other time—'

"He seized with his dry hands the straw of his bed, and continued, in a rasping, bass voice:

"'Here it is—I owe you the truth—to you, because it is necessary to tell it to some one before leaving the earth.

"'It was I who killed the children—all—it was I—for vengeance!

"'Listen. I was an honest man, very honest—very honest—very pure—adoring God—the good God—the God that they teach us to love, and not the false God, the executioner, the robber, the murderer who governs the earth—I had never done wrong, never committed a villainous act. I was pure as one unborn.

"'After I was married I had some children, and I began to love them as never father or mother loved their own. I lived only for them. I was foolish. They died, all three of them! Why? Why? What had I done? I? I had a change of heart, a furious change. Suddenly I opened my eyes as of one awakening; and I learned that God is wicked. Why had He killed my children? I opened my eyes and I saw that He loved to kill. He loves only that, Monsieur. He exists only to destroy! God is a murderer! Some death is necessary to Him every day. He causes them in all fashions, the better to amuse Himself. He has invented sickness and accident in order to divert Himself through all the long months and years. And, when He is weary, He has epidemics, pests, the cholera, quinsy, smallpox.

“How do I know all that this monster has imagined? All these evils are not enough to suffice. From time to time He sends war, in order to see two hundred thousand soldiers laid low, bruised in blood and mire, with arms and legs torn off, heads broken by bullets, like eggs that fall along the road.

“That is not all. He has made men who eat one another. And then, as men become better than He, He has made beasts to see the men chase them, slaughter, and nourish themselves with them. That is not all. He has made all the little animals that live for a day, flies which increase by myriads in an hour, ants, that one crushes, and others, many, so many that we cannot even imagine them. And all kill one another, chase one another, devour one another, murdering without ceasing. And the good God looks on and is amused, because He sees all for Himself; the largest as well as the smallest, those which are in drops of water, as well as those in the stars. He looks at them all and is amused! Ugh! Beast!

“So I, Monsieur, I also have killed some children. I acted the part for Him. It was not He who had them. It was not He, it was I. And I would have killed still more, but you took me away. That's all!

“I was going to die, guillotined. I! How He would have laughed, the reptile! Then I asked for a priest, and lied to him. I confessed. I lied, and I lived.

“Now it is finished. I can no longer escape Him. But I have no fear of Him, Monsieur, I understand Him too well.’

“It was frightful to see this miserable creature, hardly able to breathe, talking in hiccoughs, opening an enormous mouth to eject some words scarcely heard, pulling up the cloth of his straw bed, and, under a cover nearly black, moving his meager limbs as if to save himself.

“Oh! frightful being and frightful remembrance!

I asked him: ‘You have nothing more to say?’

“No, Monsieur.’

“Then, farewell.’

“Farewell, sir, one day or the other.’

“I turned toward the priest whose somber silhouette was on the wall.

“You will remain, M. Abbé?’

“I will remain.’

“Then the dying man sneered: ‘Yes, yes, he sends crows to dead bodies.’

“As for me, I had seen enough. I opened the door and went away in self-protection.”

An Old Maid

IN Argenteuil they called her Queen Hortense. No one ever knew the reason why. Perhaps because she spoke firmly, like an officer in command.

Perhaps because she was large, bony, and imperious. Perhaps because she governed a multitude of domestic animals, hens, dogs, cats, canaries, and

parrots,—those animals so dear to old maids. But she gave these familiar subjects neither dainties, nor pretty words, nor those tender puerilities which seem to slip from the lips of a woman to the velvety coat of the cat she is fondling. She governed her beasts with authority. She ruled.

She was an old maid, one of those old maids with cracked voice, and awkward gesture, whose soul seems hard. She never allowed contradiction from any person, nor argument, nor would she tolerate hesitation, or indifference, or idleness, or fatigue. No one ever heard her complain, or regret what was, or desire what was not. "Each to his part," she said, with the conviction of a fatalist. She never went to church, cared nothing for the priests, scarcely believed in God, and called all religious things "mourning merchandise."

For thirty years she had lived in her little house, with its tiny garden in front, extending along the street, never modifying her garments, changing only maids, and that mercilessly, when they became twenty-one years old.

She replaced, without tears and without regrets, her dogs or cats or birds, when they died of old age, or by accident, and she buried trespassing animals in a flower-bed, heaping the earth above them and treading it down with perfect indifference.

She had in the town some acquaintances, the families of employers, whose men went to Paris every day. Sometimes they would invite her to go to the theater with them. She inevitably fell asleep on these occasions, and they were obliged to wake her when it was time to go home. She never allowed anyone

to accompany her, having no fear by night or day. She seemed to have no love for children.

She occupied her time with a thousand masculine cares, carpentry, gardening, cutting or sawing wood, repairing her old house, even doing mason's work when it was necessary.

She had some relatives who came to see her twice a year. Her two sisters, Madame Cimme and Madame Columbel, were married, one to a florist, the other to a small householder. Madame Cimme had no children; Madame Columbel had three. Henry, Pauline, and Joseph. Henry was twenty-one, Pauline and Joseph were three, having come when one would have thought the mother past the age. No tenderness united this old maid to her kinsfolk.

In the spring of 1882, Queen Hortense became suddenly ill. The neighbors went for a physician, whom she drove away. When the priest presented himself she got out of bed, half naked, and put him out of doors. The little maid, weeping, made gruel for her.

After three days in bed, the situation became so grave that the carpenter living next door, after counsel with the physician (now reinstated with authority), took it upon himself to summon the two families.

They arrived by the same train, about ten o'clock in the morning; the Columbels having brought their little Joseph.

When they approached the gate, they saw the maid seated in a chair against the wall, weeping. The dog lay asleep on the mat before the door, under a broiling sun; two cats, that looked as if dead, lay stretched out on the windowsills, with eyes closed and paws and tails

extended at full length. A great glossy hen was promenading before the door, at the head of a flock of chickens, covered with yellow down, and in a large cage hung against the wall, covered with chickweed, were several birds, singing themselves hoarse in the light of this hot spring morning.

Two others, inseparable, in a little cage in the form of a cottage, remained quiet, side by side on their porch.

M. Cimme, a large, wheezy personage, who always entered a room first, putting aside men and women when it was necessary, remarked to the maid: "Eh, Celeste! Is it so bad as that?"

The little maid sobbed through her tears:

"She doesn't know me any more. The doctor says it is the end."

They all looked at one another.

Madame Cimme and Madame Columbel embraced each other instantly, not saying a word.

They resembled each other much, always wearing braids of hair and shawls of red cashmere, as bright as hot coals.

Cimme turned toward his brother-in-law, a pale man, yellow and thin, tormented by indigestion, who limped badly, and said to him in a serious tone:

"Gad! It was time!"

But no one dared to go into the room of the dying woman situated on the ground floor. Cimme himself stopped at that step. Columbel was the first to decide upon it; he entered, balancing himself like the mast of a ship, making a noise on the floor with the iron of his cane.

The two women ventured to follow, and M. Cimme brought up the line.

Little Joseph remained outside, playing with the dog.

A ray of sunlight fell on the bed, lighting up the hands which moved nervously, opening and shutting without ceasing. The fingers moved as if a thought animated them, as if they would signify something, indicate some idea, obey some intelligence. The rest of the body remained motionless under the covers. The angular figure gave no start. The eyes remained closed.

The relatives arranged themselves in a semicircle and, without saying a word, regarded the heaving breast and the short breathing. The little maid had followed them, still shedding tears.

Finally, Cimme asked: "What was it the doctor said?"

The servant whispered: "He said we should leave her quiet, that nothing more could be done."

Suddenly the lips of the old maid began to move. She seemed to pronounce some silent words, concealed in her dying brain, and her hands quickened their singular movement.

Then she spoke in a little, thin voice, quite unlike her own, an utterance that seemed to come from far off, perhaps from the bottom of that heart always closed.

Cimme walked upon tiptoe, finding this spectacle painful. Columbel, whose lame leg wearied him, sat down.

The two women remained standing.

Queen Hortense muttered something quickly, which they were unable to understand. She pronounced some names, called tenderly some imaginary persons:

"Come here, my little Philip, kiss your mother. You love mamma, don't you, my child? You, Rose, you will

watch your little sister while I am out. Especially, don't leave her alone, do you hear? And I forbid you to touch matches."

She was silent some seconds; then, in a loud tone, as if she would call, she said: "Henrietta!" She waited a little and continued: "Tell your father to come and speak to me before going to his office." Then suddenly: "I am suffering a little to-day, dear; promise me you will not return late; you will tell your chief that I am ill. You know it is dangerous to leave the children alone when I am in bed. I am going to make you a dish of rice and sugar for dinner. The little ones like it so much. Claire will be the happy one!"

She began to laugh, a young and noisy laugh, as she had never laughed before. "Look, John," she said, "what a droll head he has. He has smeared himself with the sugarplums, the dirty thing! Look! my dear, how funny he looks!"

Columbel, who changed the position of his lame leg every moment, murmured: "She is dreaming that she has children and a husband; the end is near."

The two sisters did not move, but seemed surprised and stupid.

The little maid said: "Will you take off your hats and your shawls, and go into the other room?"

They went out without having said a word. And Columbel followed them limping, leaving the dying woman alone again.

When they were relieved of their outer garments, the women seated themselves. Then one of the cats left the window, stretched herself, jumped into the room, then upon the knees of Ma-

dame Cimme, who began to caress her.

They heard from the next room the voice of agony, living, without doubt, in this last hour, the life she had expected, living her dreams at the very moment when all would be finished for her.

Cimme, in the garden, played with the little Joseph and the dog, amusing himself much, with the gaiety of a great man in the country, without thought of the dying woman.

But suddenly he entered, addressing the maid: "Say, then, my girl, are you going to give us some luncheon? What are you going to eat, ladies?"

They decided upon an omelet of fine herbs, a piece of fillet with new potatoes, a cheese, and a cup of coffee.

And as Madame Columbel was fumbling in her pocket for her purse, Cimme stopped her, and turning to the maid said, "You need money?" and she answered: "Yes, sir."

"How much?"

"Fifteen francs."

"Very well. Make haste, now, my girl, because I am getting hungry."

Madame Cimme, looking out at the climbing flowers bathed in the sunlight, and at two pigeons making love on the roof opposite, said, with a wounded air: "It is unfortunate to have come for so sad an event. It would be nice in the country, to-day."

Her sister sighed without response, and Columbel murmured, moved perhaps by the thought of a walk:

"My leg plagues me awfully."

Little Joseph and the dog made a terrible noise, one shouting with joy and the other barking violently. They played at hide-and-seek around the three

flower-beds, running after each other like mad.

The dying woman continued to call her children, clatting with each, imagining that she was dressing them, that she caressed them, that she was teaching them to read: "Come, Simon, repeat, A, B, C, D. You do not say it well; see, D, D, D, do you hear? Repeat, then—"

Cimme declared: "It is curious what she talks about at this time."

Then said Madame Columbel: "It would be better, perhaps, to go in there."

But Cimme dissuaded her from it:

"Why go in, since we are not able to do anything for her? Besides we are as well off here."

No one insisted. Madame observed the two green birds called inseparable. She remarked pleasantly upon this singular fidelity, and blamed men for not imitating these little creatures. Cimme looked at his wife and laughed, singing with a bantering air, "Tra-la-la, Tra-la-la," as if to say he could tell some things about her fidelity to him.

Columbel, taken with cramps in his stomach, struck the floor with his cane. The other cat entered, tail in the air. They did not sit down at table until one o'clock.

When he had tasted the wine, Columbel, whom some one had recommended to drink only choice Bordeaux, called the servant:

"Say, is there nothing better than this in the cellar?"

"Yes, sir! there is some of the wine that was served to you when you were here before."

"Oh, well, go and bring three bottles."

They tasted this wine, which seemed

excellent: Not that it proved to be remarkable, but it had been fifteen years in the cellar. Cimme declared it was just the wine for sickness.

Columbel, seized with a desire of possessing some of it, asked of the maid: "How much is left of it, my girl?"

"Oh, nearly all, sir; Miss never drinks any of it. It is the heap at the bottom."

Then Columbel turned toward his brother-in-law: "If you wish, Cimme, I will take this wine instead of anything else; it agrees with my stomach wonderfully."

The hen, in her turn, had entered with her troop of chickens; the two women amused themselves by throwing crumbs to them. Joseph and the dog, who had eaten enough, returned to the garden.

Queen Hortense spoke continually, but the voice was lower now, so that it was no longer possible to distinguish the words.

When they had finished the coffee, they all went in to learn the condition of the sick one. She seemed calm.

They went out and seated themselves in a circle in the garden, to aid digestion.

Presently the dog began to run around the chairs with all speed, carrying something in his mouth. The child ran after him violently. Both disappeared into the house. Cimme fell asleep, with his stomach in the sun.

The dying one began to speak loud again. Then suddenly she shouted.

The two women and Columbel hastened in to see what had happened. Cimme awakened but did not move, liking better things as they were.

The dying woman was sitting up,

staring with haggard eyes. Her dog, to escape the pursuit of little Joseph, had jumped upon the bed, startling her from the death agony. The dog was entrenched behind the pillow, peeping at his comrade with eyes glistening, ready to jump again at the least movement. He held in his mouth one of the slippers of his mistress, shorn of its heel in the hour he had played with it.

The child, intimidated by the woman rising so suddenly before him, remained motionless before the bed.

The hen, having just entered, had jumped upon a chair, frightened by the noise. She called desperately to her chickens, which peeped, frightened,

from under the four legs of the seat.

Queen Hortense cried out with a piercing tone: "No, no, I do not wish to die! I am not willing! Who will bring up my children? Who will care for them? Who will love them? No, I am not willing! I am not—"

She turned on her back. All was over.

The dog, much excited, jumped into the room and skipped about.

Columbel ran to the window and called his brother-in-law: "Come quickly! come quickly! I believe she is gone."

Then Cimme got up and resolutely went into the room, muttering: "It was not as long as I should have believed."

Complication

AFTER swearing for a long time that he would never marry, Jack Boudillère suddenly changed his mind. It happened one summer at the seashore, quite unexpectedly.

One morning, as he was extended on the sand, watching the women come out of the water, a little foot caught his attention, because of its slimness and delicacy. Raising his eyes higher, the entire person seemed attractive. Of this entire person he had, however, seen only the ankles and the head, emerging from a white flannel bathing suit, fastened with care. He may be called sensuous and impressionable, but it was by grace of form alone that he was captured. Afterward, he was held by the charm and sweet spirit of the young girl, who was simple and good and fresh, like her cheeks and her lips.

Presented to the family, he was pleased, and straightway became love-mad. When he saw Bertha Lannis at a distance, on the long stretch of yellow sand, he trembled from head to foot. Near her he was dumb, incapable of saying anything or even of thinking, with a kind of bubbling in his heart, a humming in his ears, and a frightened feeling in his mind. Was this love?

He did not know, he understood nothing of it, but the fact remained that he was fully decided to make this child his wife.

Her parents hesitated a long time, deterred by the bad reputation of the young man. He had a mistress, it was said,—an old mistress, an old and strong entanglement, one of those chains that is believed to be broken, but which continues to hold, nevertheless. Beyond

this, he had loved, for a longer or shorter period, every woman who had come within reach of his lips.

But he withdrew from the woman with whom he had lived, not even consenting to see her again. A friend arranged her pension, assuring her a subsistence. Jack paid, but he did not wish to speak to her, pretending henceforth that he did not know her name. She wrote letters which he would not open. Each week brought him a new disguise in the handwriting of the abandoned one. Each week a greater anger developed in him against her, and he would tear the envelope in two, without opening it, without reading a line, knowing beforehand the reproaches and complaints of the contents.

One could scarcely credit her perseverance, which lasted the whole winter long, and it was not until spring that her demand was satisfied.

The marriage took place in Paris during the early part of May. It was decided that they should not take the regular wedding journey. After a little ball, composed of a company of young cousins who would not stay past eleven o'clock, and would not prolong forever the care of the day of ceremony, the young couple intended to pass their first night at the family home and to set out the next morning for the seaside, where they had met and loved.

The night came, and they were dancing in the great drawing-room. The newly-married pair had withdrawn from the rest into a little Japanese boudoir shut off by silk hangings, and scarcely lighted this evening except by the dim rays from a colored lantern in the shape of an enormous egg, which hung from

the ceiling. The long window was open, allowing at times a fresh breath of air from without to blow upon their faces, for the evening was soft and warm, full of the odor of springtime.

They said nothing, but held each other's hands, pressing them from time to time with all their force. She was a little dismayed by this great change in her life, but smiling, emotional, ready to weep, often ready to swoon from joy, believing the entire world changed because of what had come to her, a little disturbed without knowing the reason why, and feeling all her body, all her soul, enveloped in an indefinable, delicious lassitude.

Her husband she watched persistently, smiling at him with a fixed smile. He wished to talk but found nothing to say, and remained quiet, putting all his ardor into the pressure of the hand. From time to time he murmured "Bertha!" and each time she raised her eyes to his with a sweet and tender look. They would look at each other a moment, then his eyes, fascinated by hers, would fall.

They discovered no thought to exchange. But they were alone, except as a dancing couple would sometimes cast a glance at them in passing, a furtive glance, as if it were the discreet and confidential witness of a mystery.

A door at the side opened, a domestic entered, bearing upon a tray an urgent letter which a messenger had brought. Jack trembled as he took it, seized with a vague and sudden fear, the mysterious, abrupt fear of misfortune.

He looked long at the envelope, not knowing the handwriting, not daring to open it, wishing not to read, not to

know the contents, desiring to put it in his pocket and to say to himself: "Tomorrow, to-morrow, I shall be far away and it will not matter!" But upon the corner were two words underlined: *very urgent*, which frightened him. "You will permit me, my dear," said he, and he tore off the wrapper. He read the letter, growing frightfully pale, running over it at a glance, and then seeming to spell it out.

When he raised his head his whole countenance was changed. He stammered: "My dear little one, a great misfortune has happened to my best friend. He needs me immediately, in a matter of—of life and death. Allow me to go for twenty minutes. I will return immediately."

She, trembling and affrighted, murmured: "Go, my friend!" not yet being enough of a wife to dare to ask or demand to know anything. And he disappeared. She remained alone, listening to the dance music in the next room.

He had taken a hat, the first he could find, and descended the staircase upon the run. As soon as he was mingled with the people on the street, he stopped under a gaslight in a vestibule and re-read the letter. It said:

"SIR: The Ravet girl, your old mistress, has given birth to a child which she asserts is yours. The mother is dying and implores you to visit her. I take the liberty of writing to you to ask whether you will grant the last wish of this woman, who seems to be very unhappy and worthy of pity.

"Your servant,

D. BONNARD."

When he entered the chamber of death, she was already in the last agony.

He would not have known her. The physician and the two nurses were caring for her, dragging across the room some buckets full of ice and linen.

Water covered the floor, two tapers were burning on a table; behind the bed, in a little wicker cradle, a child was crying, and, with each of its cries, the mother would try to move, shivering under the icy compresses.

She was bleeding, wounded to death, killed by this birth. Her life was slipping away; and, in spite of the ice, in spite of all care, the hemorrhage continued, hastening her last hour.

She recognized Jack, and tried to raise her hand. She was too weak for that, but the warm tears began to glide down her cheeks.

He fell on his knees beside the bed, seized one of her hands and kissed it frantically; then, little by little, he approached nearer to the wan face which strained to meet him. One of the nurses, standing with a taper in her hand, observed them, and the doctor looked at them from the remote corner of the room.

With a far-off voice, breathing hard, she said: "I am going to die, my dear; promise me you will remain till the end. Oh! do not leave me now, not at the last moment!"

He kissed her brow, her hair with a groan. "Be tranquil!" he murmured, "I will stay."

It was some minutes before she was able to speak again, she was so weak and overcome. Then she continued: "It is yours, the little one. I swear it before God, I swear it to you upon my soul, I swear it at the moment of death. I have never loved any man but you—

promise me not to abandon it—” He tried to take in his arms the poor, weak body, emptied of its life blood. He stammered, excited by remorse and chagrin: “I swear to you I will bring it up and love it. It shall never be separated from me.” Then she held Jack in an embrace. Powerless to raise her head, she held up her blanched lips in an appeal for a kiss. He bent his mouth to receive this poor, suppliant saress.

Calmed a little, she murmured in a low tone: “Take it, that I may see that you love it.”

He placed it gently on the bed between them. The little creature ceased to cry. She whispered: “Do not stir!” And he remained motionless. There he stayed, holding in his burning palms a hand that shook with the shiver of death, as he had held, an hour before, another hand that had trembled with the shiver of love. From time to time he looked at the hour, with a furtive glance of the eye, watching the hand as it passed midnight, then one o’clock, then two.

The doctor retired. The two nurses, after roaming around for some time with light step, slept now in their chairs. The child slept, and the mother, whose eyes were closed, seemed to be resting also.

Suddenly, as the pale daylight began to filter through the torn curtains, she extended her arms with so startling and violent a motion that she almost threw the child upon the floor. There was a rattling in her throat; then she turned over motionless, dead.

The nurses hastened to her side, declaring: “It is over.”

He looked once at this woman he had loved, then at the hand that marked four o’clock, and, forgetting his overcoat, fled in his evening clothes with the child in his arms.

After she had been left alone, his young bride had waited calmly at first, in the Japanese boudoir. Then, seeing that he did not return, she went back to the drawing-room, indifferent and tranquil in appearance, but frightfully disturbed. Her mother, perceiving her alone, asked where her husband was. She replied: “In his room; he will return presently.”

At the end of an hour, as everybody asked about him, she told of the letter, of the change in Jack’s face, and her fears of some misfortune.

They still waited. The guests had gone; only the parents and her relatives remained. At midnight, they put the bride in her bed, shaking with sobs. Her mother and two aunts were seated on the bed listening to her weeping. Her father had gone to the police headquarters to make inquiries. At five o’clock a light sound was heard in the corridor. The door opened and closed softly. Then suddenly a cry, like the mewling of a cat; went through the house, breaking the silence.

All the women of the house were out with one bound, and Bertha was the first to spring forward, in spite of her mother and her aunt, clothed only in her night-robe.

Jack, standing in the middle of the room, livid, breathing hard, held the child in his arms.

The four women looked at him frightened; but Bertha suddenly became

rash, her heart wrung with anguish, and ran to him saying: "What is it? What have you there?"

He had a foolish air, and answered in a husky voice: "It is—it is—I have here a child, whose mother has just died." And he put into her arms the howling little marmot.

Bertha, without saying a word, seized the child and embraced it, straining it to

her heart. Then, turning toward her husband with her eyes full of tears, she said: "The mother is dead, you say?" He answered: "Yes, just died—in my arms—I had broken with her since last summer—I knew nothing about it—only the doctor sent for me and—"

Then Bertha murmured: "Well, we will bring up this little one."

Forgiveness

SHE had been brought up in one of those families who live shut up within themselves, entirely apart from the rest of the world. They pay no attention to political events, except to chat about them at the table, and changes in government seem so far, so very far away that they are spoken of only as a matter of history—like the death of Louis XVI., or the advent of Napoleon.

Customs change, fashions succeed each other, but changes are never perceptible in this family, where old traditions are always followed. And if some impossible story arises in the neighborhood, the scandal of it dies at the threshold of this house.

The father and mother, alone in the evening, sometimes exchange a few words on such a subject, but in an undertone, as if the walls had ears.

With great discretion, the father says: "Do you know about this terrible affair in the Rivoil family?"

And the mother replies: "Who would have believed it? It is frightful!"

The children doubt nothing, but come

to the age of living, in their turn, with a bandage over their eyes and minds, without knowing that one does not always think as he speaks, nor speaks as he acts, without knowing that it is necessary to live at war with the world, or at least, in armed peace, without surmising that the ingenuous are frequently deceived, the sincere trifled with, and the good wronged.

Some live until death in this blindness of probity, loyalty, and honor; so upright that nothing can open their eyes. Others, undeceived, without knowing much, are weighed down with despair, and die believing that they are the puppets of an exceptional fatality the miserable victims of unlucky circumstances or particularly bad men.

The Savignols arranged a marriage for their daughter when she was eighteen. She married a young man from Paris, George Barton, whose business was on the Exchange. He was an attractive youth, with a smooth tongue, and he observed all the outward

proprieties necessary. But at the bottom of his heart he sneered a little at his guileless parents-in-law, calling them, among his friends, "My dear fossils."

He belonged to a good family, and the young girl was rich. He took her to live in Paris.

She became one of the provincials of Paris, of whom there are many. She remained ignorant of the great city, of its elegant people, of its pleasures and its customs, as she had always been ignorant of the perfidy and mystery of life.

Shut up in her own household, she scarcely knew the street she lived in, and when she ventured into another quarter, it seemed to her that she had journeyed far, into an unknown, strange city. She would say in the evening:

"I crossed the boulevards to-day."

Two or three times a year, her husband took her to the theater. These were feast-days not to be forgotten, which she recalled continually.

Sometimes at table, three months afterward, she would suddenly burst out laughing and exclaim:

"Do you remember that ridiculous actor who imitated the cock's crowing?"

All her interests were within the boundaries of the two allied families, who represented the whole of humanity to her. She designated them by the distinguishing prefix "the," calling them respectively "the Martinets," or "the Michelins."

Her husband lived according to his fancy, returning whenever he wished, sometimes at daybreak, pretending business, and feeling in no way constrained, so sure was he that no suspicion would ruffle this candid soul.

But one morning she received an anonymous letter. She was too much astonished and dismayed to scorn this letter, whose author declared himself to be moved by interest in her happiness, by hatred of all evil and love of truth. Her heart was too pure to understand fully the meaning of the accusations.

But it revealed to her that her husband had had a mistress for two years, a young widow, Mrs. Rosset, at whose house he passed his evenings.

She knew neither how to pretend, nor to spy, nor to plan any sort of ruse. When he returned for luncheon, she threw him the letter, sobbing, and then fled to her room.

He had time to comprehend the matter and prepare his response before he rapped at his wife's door. She opened it immediately, without looking at him. He smiled, sat down, and drew her to his knee. In a sweet voice, and a little jocosely, he said:

"My dear little one, Mrs. Rosset is a friend of mine. I have known her for ten years and like her very much. I may add that I know twenty other families of whom I have not spoken to you, knowing that you care nothing for the world or for forming new friendships. But in order to finish, once for all, these infamous lies, I will ask you to dress yourself, after luncheon, and we will go to pay a visit to this young lady, who will become your friend at once, I am sure." She embraced her husband eagerly; and, from feminine curiosity, which no sooner sleeps than wakes again, she did not refuse to go to see this unknown woman, of whom, in spite of all, she was still suspicious. She

felt by instinct that a known danger is sooner overcome.

They were ushered into a little apartment on the fourth floor of a handsome house. It was a coquettish little place, full of bric-à-brac and ornamented with works of art. After about five minutes' waiting, in a drawing-room where the light was dimmed by its generous window draperies and portières, a door opened and a young woman appeared. She was very dark, small, rather plump, and looked astonished, although she smiled. George presented them. "My wife, Madame Julie Rosset."

The young widow uttered a little cry of astonishment and joy, and came forward with both hands extended. She had not hoped for this happiness, she said, knowing that Madame Barton saw no one. But she was so happy! She was so fond of George! (She said George quite naturally, with sisterly familiarity.) And she had had great desire to know his young wife, and to love her, too.

At the end of a month these two friends were never apart from each other. They met every day, often twice a day, and nearly always dined together, either at one house or at the other. George scarcely even went out now, no longer pretended delay on account of business, but said he loved his own chimney corner.

Finally, an apartment was left vacant in the house where Madame Rosset resided. Madame Barton hastened to take it in order to be nearer her new friend.

During two whole years there was a friendship between them without a cloud, a friendship of heart and soul, tender, devoted, and delightful. Bertha

could not speak without mentioning Julie's name, for to her Julie represented perfection. She was happy with a perfect happiness, calm and secure.

But Madame Rosset fell ill. Bertha never left her. She passed nights of despair; her husband, too, was broken-hearted.

One morning, in going out from his visit the doctor took George and his wife aside, and announced that he found the condition of their friend very grave.

When he had gone out, the young people, stricken down, looked at each other and then began to weep.

They both watched that night near the bed. Bertha would embrace the sick one tenderly, while George, standing silently at the foot of her couch, would look at them with dogged persistence. The next day she was worse.

Finally, toward evening, she declared herself better, and persuaded her friends to go home to dinner.

They were sitting sadly at table, scarcely eating anything, when the maid brought George an envelope. He opened it, turned pale, and rising, said to his wife, in a constrained way: "Excuse me, I must leave you for a moment. I will return in ten minutes. Please don't go out." And he ran into his room for his hat.

Bertha waited, tortured by a new fear. But, yielding in all things, she would not go up to her friend's room again until he had returned.

As he did not re-appear, the thought came to her to look in his room to see whether he had taken his gloves, which would show whether he had really gone somewhere

She saw them there, at first glance. Near them lay a rumpled paper.

She recognized it immediately; it was the one that had called George away.

And a burning temptation took possession of her, the first of her life, to read—to know. Her conscience struggled in revolt, but curiosity lashed her on and grief directed her hand. She seized the paper, opened it, recognized the trembling handwriting as that of Julie, and read:

“Come alone and embrace me, my poor friend; I am going to die.”

She could not understand it all at once, but stood stupefied, struck especially by the thought of death. Then, suddenly, the familiarity of it seized upon her mind. This came like a great light, illuminating her whole life, showing her the infamous truth, all their treachery, all their perfidy. She saw now their cunning, their sly looks, her good faith played with, her confidence turned to account. She saw them looking into each other's faces, under the shade of her lamp at evening, reading from the same book, exchanging glances at the end of certain pages.

And her heart, stirred with indignation, bruised with suffering, sunk into an abyss of despair that had no boundaries.

When she heard steps, she fled and shut herself in her room.

Her husband called her: “Come quickly, Madame Rosset is dying!”

Bertha appeared at her door and said with trembling lip:

“Go alone to her; she has no need of me.”

He looked at her sheepishly, careless from anger, and repeated:

“Quick, quick! She is dying!”

Bertha answered: “You would prefer it to be I.”

Then he understood, probably, and left her to herself, going up again to the dying one.

There he wept without fear, or shame, indifferent to the grief of his wife, who would no longer speak to him, nor look at him, but who lived shut in with her disgust and angry revolt, praying to God morning and evening.

They lived together, nevertheless, eating together face to face, mute and hopeless.

After a time, he tried to appease her a little. But she would not forget. And so the life continued, hard for them both.

For a whole year they lived thus, strangers one to the other. Bertha almost became mad.

Then one morning, having set out at dawn, she returned toward eight o'clock carrying in both hands an enormous bouquet of roses, of white roses, all white.

She sent word to her husband that she would like to speak to him. He came in disturbed, troubled.

“Let us go out together,” she said to him. “Take these flowers, they are too heavy for me.”

He took the bouquet and followed his wife. A carriage awaited them, which started as soon as they were seated.

It stopped before the gate of a cemetery. Then Bertha, her eyes full of tears, said to George: “Take me to her grave.”

He trembled, without knowing why, but walked on before, holding the flowers in his arms. Finally he stopped before a shaft of white marble and pointed to it without a word.

She took the bouquet from him, and, kneeling, placed it at the foot of the

grave. Then her heart was raised in suppliant, silent prayer.

Her husband stood behind her, weeping, haunted by memories.

She arose and put out her hands to him.

"If you wish, we will be friends," she said.

The White Wolf

THIS is the story the old Marquis d'Arville told us after a dinner in honor of Saint-Hubert, at the house of Baron des Ravels. They had run down a stag that day. The Marquis was the only one of the guests who had not taken part in the chase. He never hunted.

During the whole of the long repast, they had talked of scarcely anything but the massacre of animals. Even the ladies interested themselves in the sanguinary and often unlikely stories, while the orators mimicked the attacks and combats between man and beast, raising their arms and speaking in thunderous tones.

M. d'Arville talked much, with a certain poesy, a little flourish, but full of effect. He must have repeated this story often, it ran so smoothly, never halting at a choice of words in which to clothe an image.

"Gentlemen, I never hunt, nor did my father, nor my grandfather, nor my great-great-grandfather. The last named was the son of a man who hunted more than all of you. He died in 1764. I will tell you how. He was named John, and was married, and became the father of the man who was my great-great-grandfather. He lived with his younger

brother, Francis d'Arville, in our castle, in the midst of a deep forest in Lorraine.

"Francis d'Arville always remained a boy through his love for hunting. They both hunted from one end of the year to the other without cessation or weariness. They loved nothing else, understood nothing else, talked only of this, and lived for this alone.

"They were possessed by this terrible, inexorable passion. It consumed them, having taken entire control of them, leaving no place for anything else. They had agreed not to put off the chase for any reason whatsoever. My great-great-grandfather was born while his father was following a fox, but John d'Arville did not interrupt his sport, and swore that the little beggar might have waited until after the death-cry! His brother Francis showed himself still more hot-headed than he. The first thing on rising, he would go to see the dogs, then the horses; then he would shoot some birds about the place, even when about to set out hunting big game.

"They were called in the country Monsieur the Marquis and Monsieur the Cadet, noblemen then not acting as do those of our time, who wish to estab-

lish in their titles a descending scale of rank, for the son of a marquis is no more a count, or the son of a viscount a baron, than the son of a general is a colonel by birth. But the niggardly vanity of the day finds profit in this arrangement. To return to my ancestors:

"They were, it appears, immoderately large, bony, hairy, violent, and vigorous. The younger one was taller than the elder, and had such a voice that, according to a legend he was very proud of, all the leaves of the forest moved when he shouted.

"And when mounted, ready for the chase, it must have been a superb sight to see these two giants astride their great horses.

"Toward the middle of the winter of that year, 1764, the cold was excessive and the wolves became ferocious.

"They even attacked belated peasants, roamed around houses at night, howled from sunset to sunrise, and ravaged the stables.

"At one time a rumor was circulated. It was said that a colossal wolf, of grayish-white color, which had eaten two children, devoured the arm of a woman, strangled all the watchdogs of the country, was now coming without fear into the house inclosures and smelling around the doors. Many inhabitants affirmed that they had felt his breath, which made the lights flicker. Shortly a panic ran through all the province. No one dared to go out after nightfall. The very shadows seemed haunted by the image of this beast.

"The brothers D'Arville resolved to find and slay him. So they called together for a grand chase all the gentlemen of the country.

"It was in vain. They had beaten the forests and scoured the thickets, but had seen nothing of him. They killed wolves, but not that one. And each night after such a chase, the beast, as if to avenge himself, attacked some traveler, or devoured some cattle, always far from the place where they had sought him.

"Finally, one night he found a way into the swine-house of the castle D'Arville and ate two beauties of the best breed.

"The two brothers were furious, interpreting the attack as one of bravado on the part of the monster—a direct injury, a defiance. Therefore, taking all their best-trained hounds, they set out to run down the beast, with courage excited by anger.

"From dawn until the sun descended behind the great nut-trees, they beat about forests with no result.

"At last, both of them, angry and disheartened, turned their horses' steps into a by path bordered by rushwood. They were marveling at the baffling power of this wolf, when suddenly they were seized with a mysterious fear.

"The elder said:

" 'This can be no ordinary beast. One might say he can think like a man.'

"The younger replied:

" 'Perhaps we should get our cousin, the Bishop, to bless a bullet for him, or ask a priest to pronounce some words to help us.'

"Then they were silent.

"John continued: 'Look at the sun, how red it is. The great wolf will do mischief to-night.'

"He had scarcely finished speaking when his horse reared. Francis's horse

started to run at the same time. A large bush covered with dead leaves rose before them, and a colossal beast, grayish white, sprang out, scampering away through the wood.

"Both gave a grunt of satisfaction, and bending to the necks of their heavy horses, they urged them on with the weight of their bodies, exciting them, hastening with voice and spur, until these strong riders seemed to carry the weight of their beasts between their knees, carrying them by force as if they were flying.

"Thus they rode, crashing through forests, crossing ravines, climbing up the sides of steep gorges, and sounding the horn, at frequent intervals, to arouse the people and the dogs of the neighborhood.

"But suddenly, in the course of this breakneck ride, my ancestor struck his forehead against a large branch and fractured his skull. He fell to the ground as if dead, while his frightened horse disappeared in the surrounding thicket.

"The younger D'Arville stopped short, sprang to the ground, seized his brother in his arms, and saw that he had lost consciousness.

"He sat down beside him, took his disfigured head upon his knees, looking earnestly at the lifeless face. Little by little a fear crept over him, a strange fear that he had never before felt, fear of the shadows, of the solitude, of the lonely woods, and also of the chimerical wolf, which had now come to be the death of his brother.

"The shadows deepened, the branches of the trees crackled in the sharp cold. Francis arose shivering, incapable of re-

maining there longer, and already feeling his strength fail. There was nothing to be heard, neither the voice of dogs nor the sound of a horn; all within this invisible horizon was mute. And in this gloomy silence and the chill of evening there was something strange and frightful.

"With his powerful hands he seized John's body and laid it across the saddle to take it home; then mounted gently behind it, his mind troubled by horrible, supernatural images, as if he were possessed.

"Suddenly, in the midst of these fears, a great form passed. It was the wolf. A violent fit of terror seized upon the hunter; something cold, like a stream of ice-water seemed to glide through his veins, and he made the sign of the cross, like a monk haunted with devils, so dismayed was he by the reappearance of the frightful wanderer. Then, his eyes falling upon the inert body before him, his fear was quickly changed to anger, and he trembled with inordinate rage.

"He pricked his horse and darted after him.

"He followed him through copses, over ravines, and around great forest trees, traversing woods that he no longer recognized, his eye fixed upon a white spot, which was ever flying from him as night covered the earth.

"His horse also seemed moved by an unknown force. He galloped on with neck extended, crashing over small trees and rocks, with the body of the dead stretched across him on the saddle. Brambles caught in his mane; his head, where it had struck the trunks of trees,

was spattered with blood; the marks of the spurs were over his flanks.

"Suddenly the animal and its rider came out of the forest, rushing through a valley as the moon appeared above the hills. This valley was stony and shut in by enormous rocks, over which it was impossible to pass; there was no other way for the wolf but to turn on his steps.

"Francis gave such a shout of joy and revenge that the echo of it was like the roll of thunder. He leaped from his horse, knife in hand.

"The bristling beast, with rounded back, was awaiting him; his eyes shining like two stars. But before joining in battle, the strong hunter, grasping his brother, seated him upon a rock, supporting his head, which was now but a mass of blood, with stones, and cried aloud to him, as to one deaf: 'Look, John! Look here!'

"Then he threw himself upon the monster. He felt himself strong enough to overthrow a mountain, to crush the very rocks in his hands. The beast meant to kill him by sinking his claws in his vitals; but the man had seized him by the throat, without even making use of his weapon, and strangled him gently, waiting until his breath stopped and he could hear the death-rattle at his heart. And he laughed, with the joy of dismay, clutching more and more with a terrible hold, and crying out in his delirium:

'Look, John! Look!' All resistance ceased. The body of the wolf was limp. He was dead.

"Then Francis, taking him in his arms, threw him down at the feet of his elder brother, crying out in expectant voice: 'Here, here, my little John, here he is!'

"Then he placed upon the saddle the two bodies, the one above the other, and started on his way.

"He returned to the castle laughing and weeping, like Gargantua at the birth of Pantagruel, shouting in triumph and stamping with delight in relating the death of the beast, and moaning and tearing at his beard in calling the name of his brother.

"Often, later, when he recalled this day, he would declare, with tears in his eyes: 'If only poor John had seen me strangle the beast, he would have died content, I am sure!'

"The widow of my ancestor inspired in her son a horror of the chase, which was transmitted from father to son down to myself."

The Marquis d'Arville was silent. Some one asked: "Is the story a legend or not?"

And the narrator replied:

"I swear to you it is true from beginning to end."

Then a lady, in a sweet little voice declared:

"It is beautiful to have passions like that."

Toine

EVERYBODY for ten leagues round knew Toine, fat Toine, "Toine-my-Fine," Antoine Mâcheblé, the landlord of Tournevent.

He had made famous this village, buried in the depths of the valley which descended to the sea. It was a poor peasant hamlet, composed of a dozen Norman houses surrounded by ditches and encircled by trees. The houses were huddled together in this shrub-covered ravine, behind the curve of the hill, which had caused the village to be called Tournevent. As birds conceal themselves in the furrows during a storm, they seemed to have sought a shelter in this hollow, a shelter against the fierce salt winds of the sea, which gnawed and burned like fire and withered and destroyed like the blasts of winter.

The whole hamlet seemed to be the property of Antoine Mâcheblé, who was besides often called Toine, and Toine-my-Fine, on account of a manner of speech of which he constantly availed himself. "My Fine is the best in France," he would say. His *fine* was his cognac, be it understood. For twenty years he had watered the country with his cognac, and in serving his customers he was in the habit of saying: "It warms the stomach and clears the head; there is nothing better for your health, my son." He called everybody "my son," although he had never had a son of his own.

Ah, yes, everyone knew old Toine, the biggest man in the canton, or even in the *arrondissement*. His little house seemed too ridiculously small to contain him, and when he was seen stand-

ing in his doorway, where he spent the greater part of every day, one wondered how he could enter his dwelling. But he did enter each time a customer presented himself, for Toine-my-Fine was invited by right to levy a little glass on all who drank in his house.

His *café* bore on its sign the legend "The Rendezvous of Friends," and old Toine was truly the friend of all the country round. People came from Fécamp and Montivilliers to see him and tipple with him and to hear his stories—for this great, good-natured man could make a tombstone laugh. He could joke without giving offense, wink an eye to express what he dare not utter, and punch one's ribs in a fit of gaiety, so as to force a laugh in spite of oneself. And then it was a curiosity just to see him drink. He drank all that was offered him by everybody, with a joy in his wicked eye, a joy which came from a double pleasure: the pleasure of regaling himself first, and the pleasure of heaping up money at the expense of his friends afterward. The blackguards of the community wondered why Toine had no children, and one day asked him as much. With a wicked wink he replied: "My wife is not attractive enough for such a fine fellow as I am."

The quarrels of Toine and his homely wife were as much enjoyed by the tippers as was their favorite cognac, for they had squabbled through the whole thirty years of their married life. Only Toine was good-natured over it, while his wife was furious. She was a tall peasant woman who walked with long stilt-like strides and carried on her thin, flat body the head of an ugly screech

owl. She spent her whole time in rearing poultry in the little yard behind the public-house, and was renowned for the success with which she fattened her fowls.

When any of the great ladies of Fécamp gave a feast to the people of quality, it was necessary to the success of the repast that it should be garnished with the celebrated fowls from mother Toine's poultry-yard.

But she was born with a vile temper and had continued to be dissatisfied with everything. Angry with everybody, she was particularly so with her husband. She jeered at his gaiety, his popularity, his good health, and his *embonpoint*; she treated him with the utmost contempt because he got his money without working for it, and because, as she said, he ate and drank as much as ten ordinary men. She declared every day that he was only fit to be littered in the stable with the naked swine, whom he resembled, and that he was only a mass of fat that made her sick at her stomach. "Wait a little, wait a little," she would shriek in his face, "we shall soon see what is going to happen! This great wind-bag will burst like a sack of grain!"

Toine laughed till he shook like a bowl of jelly and, tapping his enormous belly, replied: "Ah, my old hen, let us see you try to make your chickens as fat as this."

And rolling up his sleeve he showed his brawny arm. "Do you not see the feathers growing already?" he cried. And the customers would strike their fists on the table and fairly writhe with joy, and would stamp their feet and spit upon the floor in a delirium of delight.

The old woman grew more furious

than ever, and shouted at the top of her lungs: "Just wait a bit, we shall see what will happen. Your Toine-my-Fine will burst like a sack of grain."

And she rushed out, maddened with rage at the laughter of the crowd of drinkers.

Toine, in fact, was a wonder to see, so fat and red and short of breath had he grown. He was one of those enormous creatures with whom Death seems to amuse himself by tricks, gaieties, and fatal, buffooneries, making irresistibly comic the slow work of destruction. Instead of showing himself, as toward others, in white hairs, shrunken limbs, wrinkles, and general feebleness which made one say with a shiver: "Heavens, how he has changed!" he took pleasure in fattening Toine; in making a droll monster of him, in reddening his face and giving him the appearance of superhuman health; and the deformities which he inflicted on other beings became in Toine's case laughable and diverting instead of sinister and pitiable.

"Wait a little, wait a little," muttered mother Toine, as she scattered the grain about her poultry-yard, "we are going to see what will happen!"

II.

It happened that Toine had a seizure, and fell smitten with a paralytic stroke. They carried the giant to the little chamber partitioned off at the rear of the *café* in order that he might hear what was going on on the other side of the wall, and converse with his friends, for his brain remained clear while his enormous body was prone and helpless. They hoped for a time that his mighty limbs would recover some of their en-

ergy, but this hope disappeared very soon, and Toine-my-Fine was forced to pass his days and nights in his bed, which was made up but once a week, with the help of four friends who lifted him by his four limbs while his mattress was turned. He continued cheerful, but with a different kind of gaiety; more timid, more humble, and with the pathetic fear of a little child in the presence of his wife, who scolded and raged all the day long. "There he lies, the great glutton, the good-for-nothing idler, the nasty thing!" she cried. Toine replied nothing, only winking his eye behind the old woman's back, and turned over in the bed, the only movement he was able to make. He called this change "making a move to the north, or a move to the south." His only entertainment now was to listen to the conversation in the *café* and to join in the talk across the wall, and when he recognized the voice of a friend he would cry: "Hello, my son; is it thou, Célestin?"

And Célestin Maloisel would reply: "It is me, father Toine. How do you gallop to-day, my great rabbit?"

"I cannot gallop yet, Célestin," Toine would answer, "but I am not growing thin, either. The shell is good." Soon he invited his intimates into his chamber for company, because it pained him to see them drinking without him. He told them it grieved him not to be able to take his cognac with them. "I can stand everything else," he said; "but not to drink with you makes me sad, my sons."

Then the screech-owl's head of mother Toine would appear at the window, and she would say: "Look, look at him!

this great hulking idler, who must be fed and washed and scoured like a pig!"

And when she disappeared a red-plumaged rooster sometimes perched on the window-sill, and, looking about with his round and curious eye, gave forth a shrill crow. And sometimes two or three hens flew in and scratched and pecked about the floor, attracted by the crumbs, which fell from father Toine's plate.

The friends of Toine-my-Fine very soon deserted the *café* for his chamber, and every afternoon they gossiped around the bed of the big man. Bedridden as he was, this rascal of a Toine still amused them; he would have made the devil himself laugh, the jolly fellow! There were three friends who came every day: Célestin Maloisel, a tall, spare man with a body twisted like the trunk of an apple-tree; Prosper Horslerville, a little dried-up old man with a nose like a ferret, malicious and sly as a fox; and Césaire Paumelle, who never uttered a word, but who enjoyed himself all the same. These men brought in a board from the yard which they placed across the bed and on which they played dominoes from two o'clock in the afternoon until six. But mother Toine soon interfered: she could not endure that her husband should amuse himself by playing dominoes in his bed, and, each time she saw the play, she bounded into the room in a rage, overturned the board, seized the dominoes, and carried them into the *café*, declaring that it was enough to feed this great lump of tallow without seeing him divert himself at the expense of hard-wording people. Célestin Maloisel bent his head before the storm, but Prosper Horslerville tried to

further excite the old woman, whose rages amused him. Seeing her one day more exasperated than usual, he said: "Hello, mother Toine! Do you know what I would do if I were in your place?"

She waited for an explanation, fixing her owl-like eyes upon him. He continued:

"Your husband, who never leaves his bed, is as hot as an oven. I should set him to hatching out eggs."

She remained stupefied, thinking he was jesting, watching the meager and sly face of the peasant, who continued:

"I would put five eggs under each arm the same day that I set the yellow hen; they would all hatch out at the same time; and when they were out of their shells, I would put your husband's chicks under the hen for her to bring up. That would bring you some poultry, mother Toine."

The old woman was amazed. "Can that be?" she asked.

Prosper continued: "Why can't it? Since they put eggs in a warm box to hatch, one might as well put them in a warm bed."

She was greatly impressed with this reasoning, and went out composed and thoughtful.

Eight days later she came into Toine's chamber with her apron full of eggs, and said: "I have just put the yellow hen to set with ten eggs under her; here are ten for you! Be careful not to break them!"

Toine was astonished. "What do you mean?" he cried.

"I mean that you shall hatch them, good-for-nothing."

Toine laughed at first, then as she in-

sisted he grew angry, he resisted and obstinately refused to allow her to put the eggs under his great arms, that his warmth might hatch them. But the baffled old woman grew furious and declared: "You shall have not a bite to eat so long as you refuse to take them—there, we'll see what will happen!"

Toine was uneasy, but he said nothing till he heard the clock strike twelve; then he called to his wife, who bawled from the kitchen: "There is no dinner for you to-day, you great idler!"

He thought at first she was joking, but when he found she was in earnest he begged and prayed and swore by fits; turned himself to the north and the south, and, growing desperate under the pangs of hunger and the smell of the viands, he pounded on the wall with his great fists, until at last worn out and almost famished, he allowed his wife to introduce the eggs into his bed and place them under his arms. After that he had his soup.

When his friends arrived as usual, they believed Toine to be very ill; he seemed constrained and in pain.

Then they began to play dominoes as formerly, but Toine appeared to take no pleasure in the game, and put forth his hand so gingerly and with such evident precaution that they suspected at once something was wrong.

"Hast thou thy arm tied?" demanded Horslaville.

Toine feebly responded: "I have a feeling of heaviness in my shoulder."

Suddenly some one entered the *café*, and the players paused to listen. It was the mayor and his assistant, who called for two glasses of cognac and then began to talk of the affairs of the country.

As they spoke in low tones, Toine tried to press his ear against the wall; and forgetting his eggs, he gave a sudden lunge "to the north," which made an omelet of them in short order. At the oath he uttered, mother Toine came running in, and divining the disaster she uncovered him with a jerk. She stood a moment too enraged and breathless to speak. At the sight of the yellow poultice pasted on the flank of her husband. Then, trembling with fury, she flung herself on the paralytic and began to pound him with great force on the body, as though she were pounding her dirty linen on the banks of the river. She showered her blows upon him with the force and rapidity of a drummer beating his drum.

The friends of Toine were choking with laughter, coughing, sneezing, uttering exclamations, while the frightened man parried the attacks of his wife with due precaution in order not to break the five eggs he still had on the other side.

III.

TOINE was conquered. He was compelled to hatch eggs. He had to renounce the innocent pleasure of dominoes, to give up any effort to move to the north or south, for his wife deprived him of all nourishment every time he broke an egg. He lay on his back, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, his arms extended like wings, warming against his immense body the incipient chicks in their white shells. He spoke only in low tones as if he feared a noise as much as a movement, and he asked often about the yellow hen in the poultry-yard, who was engaged in the same task as himself. The old woman

went from the hen to her husband, and from her husband to the hen, possessed and preoccupied with the little broods which were maturing in the bed and in the nest. The country people, who soon learned the story, came in, curious and serious to get the news of Toine. They entered on tiptoe as one enters a sick-chamber and inquired with concern:

"How goes it, Toine?"

"It has to go," he answered; "but it is so long, I am tired of waiting. I get excited and feel cold shivers galloping all over my skin."

One morning his wife came in very much elated and exclaimed: "The yellow hen has hatched seven chicks; there were but three bad eggs!"

Toine felt his heart beat. How many would he have?

"Will it be soon?" he asked, with the anguish of a woman who is about to become a mother.

The old woman, who was tortured by the fear of failure, answered angrily:

"It is to be hoped so!"

They waited.

The friends, seeing that Toine's time was approaching, became very uneasy themselves. They gossiped about it in the house, and kept all the neighbors informed of the progress of affairs. Toward three o'clock Toine grew drowsy. He slept now half the time. He was suddenly awakened by an unusual tickling under his left arm. He put his hand carefully to the place and seized a little beast covered with yellow down, which struggled between his fingers. His emotion was so great that he cried out and let go the chick, which ran across his breast. The *café* was full of people. The customers rushed

into the room and circled around the bed, while mother Toine, who had arrived at the first sound, carefully caught the fledgeling as it nestled in her husband's beard. No one uttered a word. It was a warm April day; one could hear through the open window the clucking of the yellow hen calling to her new born. Toine, who perspired with emotion and agony, murmured: "I feel another one under my left arm."

His wife plunged her great, gaunt hand under the bedclothes and drew forth a second chick with all the precautions of a midwife.

The neighbors wished to see it and passed it from hand to hand, regarding it with awe as though it were a phenomenon. For the space of twenty minutes no more were hatched, then four chicks came out of their shells at the same time. This caused a great excitement among the watchers.

Toine smiled, happy at his success, and began to feel proud of this singular paternity. Such a sight had never been seen before. This was a droll man, truly! "That makes six," cried Toine. "*Sacre bleu*, what a christening there will be!" and a great laugh rang out from the public. Other people now crowded into the *café* and filled the doorway, with outstretched necks and curious eyes.

"How many has he?" they inquired.

"There are six."

Mother Toine ran with the new fledgelings to the hen, who, clucking distractedly, erected her feathers and spread wide her wings to shelter her increasing flock of little ones.

"Here comes another one!" cried Toine. He was mistaken—there were three of them. This was a triumph! The last one chipped its shell at seven o'clock in the evening. All Toine's eggs were good! He was delivered, and delirious with joy, he seized and kissed the frail little creature on the back. He could have smothered it with caresses. He wished to keep this little one in his bed until the next day, moved by the tenderness of a mother for this being to whom he had given life; but the old woman carried it away, as she had done the others, without listening to the supplications of her husband.

The friends of Toine went home delighted, conversing of the event by the way.

Horslerville remained after the others had gone, and approaching the ear of Toine whispered: "You will invite me to the first fricassee, will you not?"

At the idea of a fricassee, the visage of Toine brightened and he answered:

"Certainly I will invite thee, my son."

An Enthusiast

WE WERE just passing through Gisors, when I was awakened by hearing a trainman call the name of the town. I was falling off to sleep again when a fright-

ful jolt threw me across to a large lady opposite me.

A wheel had broken on the locomotive, which was now lying across the

track. The tender and baggage-car were also derailed and were lodged by the side of the great, dying machine, which moaned and groaned and sputtered and puffed, like a fallen horse in the street, whose breast heaves and nostrils smoke, wheezing and shivering in its whole body, yet incapable of any effort toward getting up and continuing on the way.

Our engine proved to be neither dead nor wounded; there was only some derangement, but the train could not go on, and we stood looking at the maimed iron beast that could no longer draw us, but lay, barring the track. It would be necessary, without doubt, to have a relief train sent out from Paris.

It was ten o'clock in the morning, and I decided immediately to go back to Gisors for breakfast. In walking along upon the track, I said to myself: "Gisors, Gisors, I certainly know some one here. Who is it? Gisors? Let me see. I have some friend in this town." The name immediately sprang into my mind: "Albert Marambot."

He was an old comrade in college, whom I had not seen for a dozen years or so, and who was a practitioner of the medical profession at Gisors. Often he had written inviting me to visit him; I had always promised to go but had never gone. Now I would certainly take advantage of the opportunity.

I asked the first passer-by if he knew where Dr. Marambot lived? He replied without hesitation, with the drawling accent of the Norman:

"Dauphine Street."

Soon I found on the door of the house indicated a large copper plate on which was engraved the name of my old com-

rade. I rang; the servant who opened the door, a girl with yellow hair and slow motion, kept repeating in a stupid fashion: "He's gone out, he's gone out."

I heard a sound of forks and glasses inside, and called out: "Hey, there! Marambot!" A door opened and a large, well-favored man appeared, looking disturbed, and holding a napkin in his hand.

I never should have known him. One would say he was forty-five, at least, and in a second his whole provincial life appeared before me, dulling, stupefying, and aging him. In a single bound of thought, more rapid than the gesture of extending my hand to him, I knew his whole existence, his manner of life, his bent of mind, and his theories of living. I suspected the long repasts which had rounded his body, the little naps after dinner, in the torpor of a heavy digestion sprinkled with brandy, and the vague contemplation of the sick, with thoughts of roast fowl waiting before the fire. His conversation on cooking, cider, brandy, and wine, upon certain dishes and well-made sauces appropriate for them, revealed to me nothing more than I perceived in the red puffiness of his cheeks, the heaviness of his lips, and the dullness of his eyes.

I said to him: "You do not know me. I am Raoul Aubertin."

He opened his arms and almost stifled me. His first word was:

"You certainly haven't breakfasted?"
"No."

"What luck! I am just sitting down at the table, and I have an excellent trout."

Five minutes later, I was seated at

the table opposite him. I said to him: "You are still a bachelor?"

"Surely!" he answered.

"And you manage to amuse yourself here?"

"I never find it tedious; I am too much occupied. I have my patients and my friends, eat well, sleep well, and love to laugh and to hunt. That is the way it goes."

"Then life does not get monotonous in this little town?"

"No, my dear fellow, not when one is busy. A little town, when you come to sum it up, is like a large one. Events and pleasures are less varied, but they take on more importance. Relatives and friends are less numerous, but we meet them oftener. When we know every window in sight, each one interests us, and we are more curious about them than we should be about a whole street in Paris. It is very amusing, a little town, you know, very amusing, very amusing. Now, this Gisors, I have it on the end of my fingers from its origin up to to-day. You have no idea how comical its history is."

"You are a native of Gisors?"

"I? No, I come from Gournay, its neighbor and rival. Gournay is to Gisors what Lucullus was to Cicero. Here, all is for glory; they are called 'the proud people of Gisors.' At Gournay, all is for the stomach; they are spoken of as 'the eaters of Gournay.' It is very funny, this country is."

I noticed that I was eating something truly exquisite, some fish roe enveloped in a case of jelly, the viand aromatic with herbs, and the jelly delicately seasoned.

Smacking my lips, for the sake of

flattering Marambot, I said: "This is good!"

He smiled. "Two things are necessary for this," said he, "and difficult to obtain, good jelly and good eggs. Oh! good eggs, how rare they are! with the yellow of a reddish tinge, and well flavored! I myself have a preference for two things, eggs and poultry. I keep my egg-layers in a special way. I have my own ideas. In the egg, as in the flesh of the chicken, or of mutton, or beef, we find, and ought to taste, the substance, the quintessence of the nourishment of the animal. How much better one can eat if he pays attention to these things."

I laughed. "You are an epicure, then?"

"Surely! It is only imbeciles who are not epicures. One is an epicure as he is artistic, as he is well-informed, as he is poetical. Taste is a delicate organ, as respectable and as capable of being perfected as the eye or the ear. To lack taste is to be deprived of an exquisite faculty,—that of discerning the quality of food, as one discerns the qualities of a book or a work of art; it is to be deprived of an essential sense, of an attribute of human superiority; it is to belong to one of the innumerable classes of the infirm, or disgraced, or simpletons that compose our race; it is to have the mouth of a beast, and, in a word, the mind of a beast. A man who cannot distinguish between a crayfish and a lobster, a herring and this admirable fish that carries in it all the savors and aromas of the sea, between a mackerel and a white-fish, a winter pear and a Duchesse, is capable of confounding Balzac with Eugene Suë, a symphony of

Béethoven with a military march by the leader of a regiment band, and the Apollo Belvedere with the statue of General Blanmont!"

"Who is this General Blanmont?" I asked.

"Ah! it is true, you do not know him! That shows, indeed, that you do not know Gisors! My dear friend, I said a moment ago, that we call the people of this town 'the proud people of Gisors.' Never was epithet more merited. But—we will breakfast first, and then I shall tell you about our town, and take you around to visit it."

He ceased speaking from time to time to drink slowly a little glass of wine which he looked at tenderly before setting on the table. With napkin fastened about his neck, with cheek-bones reddening, and whiskers blossoming about his mouth as if worked, he was amusing to look at.

He made me eat to suffocation. Then, when I wished to go back to the railway station, he seized me in his arms and drew me away in another street. The town, of a pretty, provincial character, was overlooked by its fortress, the most curious monument of military architecture of the eighth century that there is in France. The rear of the fortress overlooked, in its turn, a long, green valley, where the heavy cows of Normandy browsed and chewed their cuds in the pastures.

The doctor said to me: "Gisors, town of four thousand inhabitants, on the borders of the Eure, was mentioned in the 'Commentaries' of Cæsar: Cæsaris ostium, then, Cæsartium, Cæsartium, Gisortium, Gisors. I could take you to the encampment of the Roman army,

of which there are traces quite visible still."

I laughed and replied: "My dear friend, it seems to me that you are threatened with a special malady that you ought to study—you, a medical man—something that might be called the spirit of rivalry."

He stopped short. "The spirit of rivalry, my friend," said he, "is nothing else than natural patriotism. I love my house, my town, and my province throughout its whole extent, because I find there the customs of my village; but, if I love the frontier, if I defend it, if I am angry when the stranger sets his foot there, it is because I already feel my own house menaced; because the frontier, which I do not know, is the road to my province. Thus I am a Norman, a true Norman; and in spite of my rancor against Germany and my desire for vengeance, I do not detest it, I do not hate it by instinct as I hate the English, the veritable enemy, the hereditary enemy, the natural enemy of the Norman, because the English have passed over the soil settled by my ancestors, and pillaged and ravaged it twenty times, and the aversion to this perfidious people has been transmitted to me with life itself, from my father—Wait, here is the statue of the general."

"What general?"

"General Blanmont. We thought we ought to have a statue. We are not 'the proud people of Gisors' for nothing! Then, we discovered General Blanmont. Just look through the glass door in this library."

I turned toward the front of a book-case where a small collection of volumes, yellow, red, and blue, met my eye. In

reading the titles, a desire to laugh seized me; they were: "Gisors, Its Origin and Future, By M. X—— Member of Many Learned Societies"; "History of Gisors, By Abbé——"; "Gisors, from Cæsar to Our Time, by Dr. C. D.——"; "The Glories of Gisors, by an Inquirer."

"My dear boy," began Marambot, "not a year passes, not one year, you understand, without at least one new history of Gisors appearing. We have twenty-three of them."

"And who are the celebrities of Gisors?" I asked.

"Oh! I cannot tell you all of them; I shall only tell you the principal ones: First, we have General Blanmont, then Baron Davillier, the celebrated ceramist who explored Spain and the Balearic Islands, and revealed to collectors some admirable Spanish-Arabian porcelains. In letters, we have a journalist of great merit, now dead, Charles Brainne, and among the living, the very eminent director of the 'Rouen Gazetteer,' Charles Lapierre, and many more, still many more."

We were going along rapidly through a steep street beaten upon by a June sun so hot that it had driven the inhabitants within doors. Suddenly, at the other end of this road, a man appeared—a drunken man, reeling. He came on, with head down, arms hanging at his sides, and tottering limbs, at a jerky gait of six or eight rapid steps, followed by a rest. Then an energetic bound would take him to the middle of the street, where he would stop short and balance himself upon his feet, hesitating between a fall and a new attack of energy. Then he would repeat the opera-

tion in another direction. Finally he ran against a house, where he seemed to stick fast, as if he would enter it through the wall. Then he turned and looked before him, his mouth open, his eyes blinking in the sun; and with a wrench of his back, he detached himself from the wall and started again.

A little yellow dog, a famished cur, followed him barking, stopping when he stopped and starting when he started.

"Wait," said Marambot, "there is one of Madame Huisson's rose-winners."

I was much astonished, and replied: "Madame Huisson's rose-winners—what do you mean?"

The doctor laughed. "Oh! It is a way we have here of calling a man a drunkard. It comes from an old story now passed into legend, which was true nevertheless, in all points."

"Is it amusing, this story?"

"Very amusing."

"Then tell it, will you?"

"Very willingly. There was once in this town an old lady, very virtuous herself and the protector of virtue, who was called Madame Huisson. And you must know I am telling you true names and not fictitious ones. Madame Huisson occupied herself with good works, helping the poor and encouraging those that merited it. She was little, walking with quick, short steps, and wore a black silk wig. She was very polite and ceremonious, on excellent terms with the good God, as represented by Abbé Malou, and she had a profound, inborn horror of the vice the Church calls luxury. Pregnancies before marriage made her lose her temper, exasperating her to the point of making her beside herself.

"It was the epoch when they were crowning virtue with roses in the suburbs of Paris, and the idea came to Madame Huisson to have the same kind of festival in Gisors. She discussed it with Abbé Malou, who immediately made out a list of candidates for her.

"But Madame Huisson had in her service as maid an old woman named Frances, as strict as her mistress. When the priest had gone, the mistress called her servant and said to her: 'Frances, here are the names of some girls that the curate proposes for the prize of virtue; make it your business to find out what people think of them around here.'

"And Frances began to go about the country. She culled all the deceptions, stories, suspicions, and tattle, and, for fear of forgetting some of the details, she wrote them down with her expenses in her kitchen-book, and every morning she took the book to Madame Huisson who read it carefully, after adjusting her spectacles over her thin nose:

"'Bread, four sous. Milk, two sous. Butter, eight sous.

"'Malvina Levesque went wild last year with Matthew Poilu. One leg of mutton, twenty-five sous. Salt, one sou.

"'Rosalie Vatinel was met in the wood with Cæsar Pienoir, at dusk, by Mrs. Onesime, ironer, the twentieth of July. Radishes, one sou. Vinegar, two sous. Sorrel, two sous. Josephine Durdent, that nobody had believed had any fault, is found to have a correspondence with the son of Oportun, who is in service at Rouen, and who sent her a bonnet by the diligence for a present.'

"Not a girl escaped intact in this scrupulous inquisition. Frances asked questions of everybody,—the neighbors, the traders, the schoolmaster, the sis-

ters of the school,—and summed up the reports.

"As there is not a girl in the universe upon whom comments have not been passed, at one time or another, not a single young woman beyond slander was found in the whole countryside.

"Now, Madame Huisson wished her rose-winner to be like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion, and she stood amazed, desolate, and in despair before the kitchen-book of her maidservant.

"They enlarged the circle of inquiry even to the neighboring villages, but found no favorable result. The mayor was consulted. All his protégées were judged unsatisfactory. Those of Dr. Barbesol had no greater success, in spite of the precision of scientific guaranties.

"One morning Frances came in from one of her tours, and said to her mistress:

"'It seems, Madame, that if you wish to crown somebody, there is nobody but Isidore in all the vicinity that is worthy of it.'

Madame Huisson remained quiet and thoughtful.

"She knew Isidore well, the son of Virginia, the fruit-seller. His proverbial chastity had been the delight of Gisors for many years, serving as a pleasant theme of conversation and amusement for the girls, who made themselves very merry at his expense. Over twenty-one in age, large, awkward, slow, and timid, he helped his mother at her trade, passing his days in picking over fruits and vegetables, seated on a chair before the door.

"He had an abnormal fear of petticoats that caused him to lower his eyes

when a fair customer looked at him and smiled; and this timidity, being well known, rendered him the sport of all the wags of the place. Bold words, impure allusions, expressions of doubtful meaning, made him blush so quickly that Dr. Barbesol nicknamed him the thermometer of modesty. Did he know anything or did he not? his rogues of neighbors would ask one another. Was it simply a presentiment of unknown mysteries, or honest indignation for vile relations intended for love alone, which seemed to move so strongly the son of Virginia, the fruit-seller? The imps of the neighborhood would run up before his shop and throw pieces of filth in his face, just to see him lower his eyes. The girls amused themselves passing and re-passing his door, calling out bewitchingly to him, until he would go into the house. Some of the boldest would provoke him openly, for the sake of laughing at him, asking him to meet them, and proposing abominable things.

"And so Madame Huisson kept thinking.

"Certainly, Isidore was a case of exceptional virtue, notorious and unassailable. No one, even the most sceptical, the most incredulous, could or would have dared to have a suspicion that Isidore was guilty of the slightest infraction of the moral law. No one had ever seen him in a *café*, or met him in the streets in the evening. He went to bed at eight o'clock and arose at four. He was perfection; a pearl.

"Nevertheless, Madame Huisson hesitated. The idea of substituting a masculine rose-winner for a feminine troubled her, disturbing her not a little, and she resolved to consult Abbé Malou.

"The abbé replied: 'What do you wish to recompense, Madame? It is virtue, is it not, and nothing but virtue? What matters it, then, whether it be male or female? Virtue is eternal; it has neither country nor sex; it is simply virtue!'

"Thus encouraged, Madame Huisson went to find the mayor. He approved of it at once. 'Let us make it a beautiful ceremony,' said he; 'and in one year, if we find a young woman as worthy as Isidore, we will then crown her. In this way we shall set a beautiful example to Nantes. Let us not be exclusive, but welcome merit wherever we find it.'

"Isidore, engaged for the occasion, blushed very red, but seemed content. The ceremony was fixed for the fifteenth of August, the feast-day of the Virgin Mary, and also that of the Emperor Napoleon.

"The municipality decided to give a grand demonstration in honor of this solemnity and ordered as a stage for the crowners an enlargement of the charming ramparts of the old fortress, which I shall soon take you to see.

"By a natural revolution of public spirit, Isidore's virtue, scoffed at until that day, had suddenly become respectable, since it would bring him five hundred francs, besides a little expense-book, which was a mountain of consideration and glory to spare. The girls now regretted their frivolity, their laughter, and their freedom of manner; and Isidore, although as modest and timid as ever, had taken on a little air of satisfaction which bespoke an inward joy.

"On the eve of the fifteenth of August, the whole of Dauphine Street was hung with draperies. Ah! I have forgotten

to tell you from what event the street received its name. It appears that, years ago, the princess—some princess, I don't know her name—had been detained so long by the authorities in some public demonstration, that, in the midst of a triumphal march across the town, she stopped the procession before one of the houses of this street and exclaimed: 'Oh! what a pretty house! How I wish I might visit it! To whom does it belong?' They gave her the name of the owner, who was sought out and led, proud but confused, before the princess. She got out of her carriage; entered the house, inspected it from top to bottom, even remaining in one particular room for some minutes. When she had gone, the people, flattered by the honor received by a citizen of Gisors, cried: 'Long live the Princess!' But a little song was composed by a joker, and the street received a royal name, because of the lines, which ran thus:

"The Princess, in a hurry,
Without priest, as she ought to,
Had, with a little water,
Baptized it.'

"But to return to Isidore. They threw flowers all along the course of the procession, as they do for processions on the church feast-days. The National Guard was on foot under orders from its chief, Commander Desbarres, an old soldier of the Grand Army, who displayed with pride the cross of honor given to him by Napoleon himself, for the beard of a Cossack culled with a single blow of the saber by the commander from the chin of its owner in the retreat from Russia.

"The company he commanded, besides being a corps composed of the *élite*, celebrated in all the province, was the company of Gisors grenadiers, who were in demand at every celebration of note within a radius of fifteen or twenty miles. They tell how King Louis-Philippe, passing in review the militia of Eure, once stopped in astonishment before the Gisors company and exclaimed: 'Oh! who are these handsome grenadiers?'

"'From Gisors,' replied the general.

"'I can scarcely believe it,' murmured the king.

"Now, Commander Desbarres came with these men, music at the head, to take Isidore from his mother's shop. After a little air had been played under his windows, the rose-winner himself appeared on the threshold. He was clothed in white duck from head to foot, and wore on his head a straw cap which had on it, like a cockade, a bouquet of orange-flowers

"This question of costume had much disturbed Madame Huisson, who hesitated a long time between the black coat of the first communicant and the complete suit of white. But Frances, her counselor, decided in favor of the white, as it would tend to give the rose-winner the air of a great poet.

"Behind him appeared his protector, his god-mother, Madame Huisson, triumphant. She took his arm upon going out, and the mayor walked at the other side of the hero. The drums beat. Commander Desbarres shouted: 'Present arms!' And the procession started on its march to the church, amid a large concourse of people assembled from all the neighboring towns and villages.

"After a short mass and a touching address by Abbé Malou, they repaired to the coronation grounds, where the banquet was served under a tent. Before sitting down at the table, the mayor had a word to say. Here is his discourse *verbatim*. I learned it by heart because it was so beautiful:

"Young man, a good woman, loved by the poor and respected by the rich, Madame Huisson, whom the entire country thanks here through my voice, had the thought, the happy, beneficent thought, of founding in this town a prize of virtue, which would be a precious encouragement offered to the inhabitants of this beautiful country.

"You, young man, are the first one crowned in the dynasty of chastity, and of this wise woman. Your name will remain at the head of this list of the deserving ones; and it will be necessary that your life, you understand, your whole life shall be in accord with this beginning. To-day, face to face with this noble woman who recompenses your virtuous conduct, face to face with these soldier-citizens who have taken up arms in your honor, and with these sympathetic people, reunited to cheer you, or rather to cheer in your virtue, may you contract the solemn engagement toward this town, toward all of us to set, until the day of your death, the excellent example of your youth. Do not forget, young man, that you are the first grain sown in the field of hope; give us the fruits that we expect from you."

"The mayor took three steps, opened his arms, and pressed the sobbing Isidore to his heart.

"The rose-winner was sobbing, but without knowing why, from a confusion of emotion, pride and a tenderness, vague and joyous.

Then the mayor put in his hand a silk purse which rung with gold, five hundred

francs in gold! And in the other hand he put the little expense-book. Then, in a solemn voice, he pronounced these words; 'Homage, Glory, and Riches, to Virtue!'

"Commander Desbarres shouted: 'Bravo!' The grenadiers followed his example, and the people applauded. Madame Huisson was drying her eyes.

"Then they took their places around the table where the banquet was served. It was magnificent and prolonged. Dish followed dish; yellow cider and red wine fraternized in neighboring glasses and mingled in the same stomachs. The rattle of dishes and of voices and the music, which played softly, made a continuous, profound rumble that lost itself in the clear sky where the swallows were flying. Madame Huisson readjusted her black silk wig from time to time, as it became tipped over one ear in her chat with Abbé Malou. The mayor, excited, talked politics with Commander Desbarres, and Isidore ate, Isidore drank, as he never had eaten or drunk before! He took and retook of everything, perceiving for the first time that it was sweet to feel himself filled with good things, which first gave pleasure to his palate. He had adroitly loosened the buckle of his trousers, which bound him under the pressure of growing corpulence, and silent, a little disturbed by the knowledge that a drop of wine had fallen on his white coat, he ceased to eat in order to carry his glass to his mouth and keep it there as long as possible, that he might taste the wine slowly.

"The hour of the toasts struck. They were numerous and well applauded. The evening came; they had been at the table since midday. Already vapors

soft and milky-white were floating in the valley, clothing lightly with the shadow of night the brooks and the fields; the sun touched the horizon; the cows bellowed from afar in the brown haze of the pastures. The feast was ended. They were going back to Gisors. The procession, broken now, was marching helter-skelter. Madame Huisson had taken Isidore's arm and was giving him numerous injunctions, hurried but excellent.

"They arrived at the door of the fruit-seller, and the rose-winner was left at his mother's house. She had not yet returned. Invited by her family to celebrate the triumph of her son, she had taken luncheon with her sister, after following the procession as far as the banquet tent. So Isidore was alone in the shop, which was almost dark.

"He seated himself upon a chair, agitated by wine and by pride, and looked about him. Carrots, cabbages, and onions diffused through the closed room the strong odor of vegetables, mingling their rude garden aroma with a sweet, penetrating fragrance, the fresh and light perfume escaping from a basket of peaches.

"The rose-winner took a peach and ate it, although he was already as round as a pumpkin. Then, suddenly excited with joy, he began to dance, and something rattled in his coat. He was surprised, thrust his hand in his pocket and brought out the purse with the five hundred francs which he had forgotten in his drunkenness. Five hundred francs! What a fortune! He turned the money out upon the counter and dropped it slowly through his fingers, so as to see them all at the same time. There were

twenty-five of them, twenty-five round pieces of gold! All gold! They shone upon the wood in the thick shadows, and he counted them and recounted them, placing his finger upon each one, murmuring: 'One, two, three, four, five,—one hundred; six, seven, eight, nine, ten,—two hundred.' Then he put them in his purse again and concealed it in his pocket.

"Who can know and who can say what sort of combat took place in the soul of this rose-winner between the evil and the good, the tumultuous attack of Satan, his snares and deceits, the temptations that he threw into this timid, virgin heart? What suggestions, what images, what covetous desires had the Rogue of all rogues invented for moving and ruining this chosen soul? He seized his cap, chosen by Madame Huisson, his cap which still bore the bouquet of orange-flowers, and, going out by the street back of the house, he disappeared into the night.

* * * * *

"Virginia, the fruit-seller, having been told that her son had returned, came back almost immediately and found the house empty. She waited without being astonished at first; then, at the end of a quarter of an hour, she began to inquire. The neighbors in Dauphine Street had seen Isidore enter the house and had not seen him go out again. Then they searched for him, but could not find him. The fruit-seller, much disturbed, ran to the mayor. The mayor knew nothing about the youth, except that he had left him at his mother's door. Madame Huisson left her bed, when she heard that her protégé had disappeared. She immediately put on her

wig, and went to Virginia's house. Virginia, who had a soul easily moved, wept tears among her cabbages, carrots and onions.

"They feared some accident. What? Commander Desbarres called out the mounted police, who made a tour around the whole town; he found, on the road from Pontoise, the little bouquet of orange-flowers. It was placed upon a table around which the authorities sat in deliberation. The rose-winner had been the victim of some stratagem on account of jealousy; but how? What means had they employed to carry off this innocent one, and to what end?

"Weary of searching without finding, the authorities retired. Virginia, alone, watched in her tears.

"The next evening, when the diligence from Paris was passing through the village on its return, the people of Gisors learned with surprise that their rose-winner had stopped the coach two hundred meters from their town, had mounted, paid for his place with a louis of the money they had given him, and that he had alighted calmly in the heart of the great city.

"The excitement in the country was considerable. Letters were exchanged between the mayor and the chief of police at Paris, but they led to no discovery. Day followed day, until a week had passed.

"Then one morning Dr. Barbesol, going out at an early hour, saw a man sitting in a doorway, clothed in grimy white, sleeping with his head against the wall. He approached him and recognized Isidore. Trying to awaken him, he found it impossible. The ex-rose-winner slept with a sleep so profound,

unconquerable, and unusual, that the doctor, much surprised, sought aid in carrying the young man to Boncheval's pharmacy. When they lifted him, a bottle, apparently empty, was lying under him, and, having smelled of it, the doctor declared it had contained brandy. It was an indication that served their purpose. They understood. Isidore was drunk; had been drunk and besotted for eight days, and was too disgusting to be touched by a ragpicker. His beautiful costume of white duck had become a grimy rag, yellow, greasy, muddy, slashed, and wholly debased; and his person exhaled all sorts of nauseating odors from the brook of vice.

"He was washed, preached to, shut up, and for four days did not go out. He seemed honest and repentant. They had not found upon him either the purse with the five hundred francs, or the expense-book, or his gold watch, a sacred inheritance from his father, the fruiterer.

"On the fifth day, he risked himself in Dauphine Street. Curious looks followed him, and he went along by the houses with lowered head and shifty eyes. They lost sight of him on the way from the town through the valley. But two hours later he reappeared, giggling, and hitting himself against walls. He was drunk again, hopelessly drunk.

"Nothing could cure him. Driven out by his mother, he became a driver of coal wagons for the business house of Pougrisel, which exists to-day. His reputation as a drunkard became so great, and extended so far, that even at Evreux they spoke of the rose-winner of Madame Huisson, and the legends of the country have preserved this nickname.

"A good deed is never lost."

* * * * *

Dr. Marambot rubbed his hands in finishing his history.

"Did you know this rose-winner yourself?" I inquired.

"Yes," said he, "I had the honor of shutting his eyes."

"How did he die?"

"In a crisis of delirium tremens, naturally."

We had come to the old fortress, heaped with ruined walls overlooking the tower of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and the tower called the Prisoner. Marambot told me the history of this prisoner, who, with the end of a nail, covered the walls of his dungeon with sculpture, following the movements of the sun across the narrow slit in a murderer's cell.

Then I learned that Clotaire II. had given Gisors to his cousin Saint Romain, Bishop of Rouen; that Gisors ceased to be the capital of Vexin after the treaty of St. Clair on the Epte; that the town is the first strategic point of that part of France; and that it has been, on account of this advantage, taken and retaken an infinite number of times. Upon the order of William the Red, the celebrated engineer, Robert de Bellesme, constructed there a powerful fortress, attacked later by Louis the Great, then

by the Norman barons; it was defended by Robert de Candos, ceded finally by Louis the Great to Goeffrey Plantagenet, and was retaken from the English, following the treaty of the Templars. It was disputed between Philip Augustus and Richard the Lion-Hearted; burned by Edward III. of England, who could not take the castle; rebuilt by the English again in 1419; surrendered later to Charles VII. by Richard de Marbury; taken by the Duke of Calabre, occupied by the League, inhabited by Henry IV., etc.

And Marambot, convinced, almost eloquent, repeated: "What scoundrels those English are! And what drinkers, my dear friend, and all rose-winners, are those hypocrites, every one of them!"

After that there was a silence, and he held out his arms to the thin little river that glistened through the level fields. Then he said:

"You know that Henry Monnier was one of the most assiduous of fishermen on the banks of the Epte?"

"No, I did not know it."

"And Bouffé, my dear fellow, Bouffé was here as painter and glazier."

"Oh! come, now!"

"Yes, truly. How can you be so ignorant of these things?"

The Traveler's Story

WE went up on the bridge again after dinner. The Mediterranean before us had not a ripple on its whole surface, in which a great, calm moon was reflected. The huge steamer sped along, throwing

to the heavens sown with stars a great serpent of black smoke. And behind us the whitened water, agitated by the rapid passing of the heavy ship, seemed to be in torture, beaten into

froth by the screw, and changed from its smooth splendor where it lay quiet under the rays of the brilliant moon.

We were there, several of us, silent, admiring, our eyes turned toward Africa, whither we were bound. The commander, smoking a cigar as he stood among us, suddenly took up the conversation of the dinner-table:

"Yes, I did have some fears that day. My ship had been six hours with that rocking in the hold, beaten by the sea. Happily, we were picked up toward evening, by an English collier that had spied us."

Then a great man of burly figure and grave aspect, one of those men who seem to have come from some unknown and distant country, from the midst of incessant dangers, whose tranquil eye, in its profundity, appears to hold in some way the foreign landscapes he has seen,—one of those men who give the impression of possessing great courage, spoke for the first time:

"You say, commander; that you were afraid. I cannot believe that. You deceive yourself in the word, and in the sensation you experienced. An energetic man is never afraid in the face of pressing danger. He is moved, excited, anxious, but fear is another thing."

The commander, laughing, replied: "Nonsense! I tell you frankly that I was afraid."

Then the man with the bronze tint said in a slow manner:

"Allow me to explain myself! Fear (and the hardest men can experience fear) is something frightful, an atrocious sensation, like the decomposition of the soul, a frightful spasm of thought and of the heart, of which the mere remem-

brance sends a shiver of agony through the frame. But this is not felt when one is brave, nor before an attack, nor before inevitable death, nor before any of all the known forms of peril; it is felt in abnormal circumstances, under certain mysterious influences, in the face of vague dangers. True fear is something like a reminiscence of fantastic terrors of other times. A man who believes in spirits, and who imagines that he sees a specter in the night, should understand fear in all its horror.

"As for me, I have understood what fear is, in broad day. It was about ten years ago. I also felt it again last winter, one night in December.

"Yet I have taken many chances, had many adventures that seemed mortal. I have often fought. I have been left for dead by robbers. I have been condemned as an insurgent, in America; doomed to be hanged, and thrown into the sea from the bridge of a ship in China. Each time I believed myself lost, but undertook to make the best of it immediately, without grief or even regret.

"But fear—that is something else.

"I had a presentiment in Africa—although presentiment in a daughter of the north—the sun dissipates it like a fog. Notice that well, gentlemen. Among the Orientals, life counts for nothing. They are always resigned to meet death. Nights are clear and free from the disquieting shadows which haunt the brains of the people of cold countries. In the Orient they understand panic, but they are ignorant of fear.

"Well! Here is what happened to me on African soil:

"I had crossed the great dunes in the

south of Ouargla. That is one of the strangest countries in the world. You are familiar with level sand, the true sand of the interminable shore of the sea. Well, figure to yourselves the ocean itself sand, and in the midst of a hurricane; imagine a silent tempest of motionless waves in yellow dust. They are as high as mountains, these unequal waves, differing from each other, and raised suddenly, like unchained billows, but greater still, and streaked like water waves. Upon this furious sea, mute, immovable, the sun of the south turns its implacable and direct flame, devouring it. It is necessary to climb these waves of golden ashes, to redescend, to climb again, to climb incessantly, without repose and without shade. Horses puff, sinking to their knees, and slipping in, they go down the other side of these surprising little hills.

"We were two friends, followed by eight *spahis* and four camels with their drivers. We could no longer speak, as we were suffocated with heat and fatigue and parched with thirst, like this burning desert. Suddenly one of our men uttered a kind of cry. All stopped, and we remained motionless, surprised by an inexplicable phenomenon, known only to travelers in these lost countries.

"Somewhere, near us, in an indeterminate direction, a drum was beating, the mysterious drum of the dunes. It was heard distinctly, at first vibrating loudly, then more feebly, stopping, then taking up its fantastic rolling again.

"The Arabs, much frightened, looked at one another, and one said in his own language: 'Death is upon us.'

"Just then, suddenly, my companion, my friend, almost my brother, fell on his

head from his horse, overcome with sunstroke. And for the next two hours, during which I tried in vain to save him, that unseizable drum filled my ears with its monotonous noise, intermittent and incomprehensible.

"I felt slipping into my bones a fear, true fear, hideous fear, in the face of my dead friend, well-beloved, in this hole, burning up in the sun, between four mountains of sand, where an unknown echo brought to us the rapid beating of a drum, two hundred miles from any French village.

"That day, I understood what it was to have fear; and I understood it still better on one other occasion."

The commander interrupted the speaker: "Pardon, sir, but this drum? What was it?"

The traveler answered: "That I do not know. No one knew. The officers, often surprised by this singular noise, attributed it generally to a great echo, multiplied, swelled immeasurably by the little valleys of the dunes, caused by particles of sand being carried in the wind and hurled against a bunch of dried herbs; because they always noticed that the phenomenon was produced in the neighborhood of plants dried in the sun, and hard as parchment. This drum, then, was a kind of mirage of sound. That is all. But I learned that later.

"Now I come to my second emotion.

"This came to me last winter, in a forest in the northeast of France. The night fell two hours earlier than usual, the sky was so cloudy. I had for a guide a peasant, who walked at my side through a little road, under an arch of pines, through which the unchained wind howled dismally. Between the hilltops

I could see clouds scurrying away in line, lost clouds, which seemed to be fleeing before some fright. Sometimes, under a powerful whirlwind, the whole forest bowed in the same breath with a groan of suffering. And the cold took me by force, in spite of my rapid walk and heavy clothing.

"We were going to take supper and sleep at the house of a forest guide whose house was not far from the place where we were. I was going there to hunt.

"My guide would sometimes raise his eyes and mutter: 'Bad weather!' Then he spoke of the people to whose house we were going. The father had killed a poacher, two years before, and since then he had seemed somber, as if haunted by a memory. His two sons were married and lived with him.

"The shadows were profound. I could see nothing before me, nor about me; and the branches of the trees, clashing against each other, filled the night with confusion. Finally I perceived a light, and soon my companion knocked on a door. The sharp cries of women responded. Then the voice of a man, a strangled voice, asked: 'Who is there?' My guide gave our names. We entered. It was a picture never to be forgotten.

"An old man with white hair and a mad expression of the eye, awaited us in the middle of the kitchen with a loaded gun in his hand, while two great fellows, armed with hatchets, guarded the door. I distinguished in the dark corner two women on their knees, their faces turned against the wall.

"They explained it. The old man put up his gun and ordered them to prepare

my room; then, as the women did not budge, he said brusquely:

"'You see, sir, I killed a man here, two years ago to-night. Last year he came back to me. I am expecting him this evening.'

"Then he added, in a tone that made me laugh.

"'So, we are not quite easy.'

"I reassured him as best I could, happy to have come just at this time to assist at the spectacle of this superstitious terror. I told stories, and succeeded in calming them all somewhat.

"Near the entrance was an old dog, whiskered and nearly blind, one of those dogs that resemble people we know, asleep, with his nose in his paws.

"Outside, the raging tempest was beating against the little house, and through a small hole, a kind of Judas-place, near the door, I suddenly saw, by a sharp flash of lightning, a clump of great trees over-turned by the wind.

"In spite of my efforts, I felt sure that a profound terror held these people, and each time that I ceased to speak, all ears seemed to be listening to something in the distance. Weary of trying to dispel these imbecile fears, I asked permission to go to bed, when the old guard suddenly made a bound from his chair, seized his gun again, and stuttered, in a far-away voice:

"'Here he is! Here he is! I'm waiting for him!'

"The two women fell upon their knees in their corners, concealing their faces, and the sons took up their hatchets. I was trying to appease them again when the sleeping dog awoke suddenly, and, raising his head, stretching his neck, and looking toward the fire with

eyes almost closed, began to utter the most lugubrious howls, of the sort that gave a start to travelers in the country at night. All eyes were turned toward him; he remained motionless, resting upon his paws, as if haunted by a vision.

"He was howling at something invisible, unknown, frightful, no doubt, because his hair was bristling. The guide, now livid, cried out:

"He feels him! He feels him! He was there when I killed him!"

"And the two excited women began to howl with the dog.

"In spite of myself a great shiver ran down between my shoulders. The sight of the terrified animal in that place, at that hour, in the midst of those benighted people, was frightful.

"For an hour, the dog howled without ceasing; his wails sounded as if he were in agony from a dream. And fear, ungovernable fear, entered my being. Fear of what? Did I know what? It was fear, and that was all.

"We remained motionless, livid, in expectation of some frightful event, with listening ear and beating heart, starting at the least noise. And the dog began to go about the room, touching the walls, and growling. That beast nearly made us mad!

"The peasant who had brought me threw himself upon the animal, in a kind of paroxysm of furious terror, and opening the door, with a little push threw it outside.

"He was then silent, and all of us remained plunged in a silence more terrifying still. Suddenly we all started with surprise. A form glittered on the wall,

the outside wall toward the forest; then it passed against the door, which it seemed to touch with hesitating hand; then we heard nothing for two minutes, which almost drove us out of our senses; then it returned, always rubbing against the wall; and it scratched lightly, as a child does with his nail; then suddenly a head appeared against the glass, a white head, with luminous eyes like those of a deer. And there came from his mouth an indistinct sound, a plaintive murmur.

"Then a fearful noise resounded through the kitchen. The old guide had shot. And immediately the sons hurried to block up the door, putting against it the great table and bringing the side-table to its assistance.

"And I swear to you that from the fracas of that gunshot, which I had not expected, I had such an agony of heart and soul and body that I felt myself swooning, ready to die of fear.

"We remained there until light, incapable of moving, not saying a word, stiff with indescribable fright.

"They did not dare take down the barricade until, through a crevice in the door, they saw a ray of daylight.

"At the foot of the wall, opposite the door, the old dog lay, his mouth pierced with a ball.

"He had gone out of the yard, crossing through a hole under the fence."

The man with the bronzed visage was silent; but he added soon:

"That night I ran into no danger; but I would rather encounter all the hours that have brought me the greatest peril than that one minute of the shooting at the shaggy head of the old dog."²¹

VOLUME VII

A Jolly Fellow

THEY called him Saint Anthony, because his name was Anthony, and also, perhaps because he was a joyous good lover, fond of joking, powerful at eating and drinking, and had a vigorous hand with servants, although he was more than sixty years old. He was a tall peasant of the country of Caux, of high color, great in chest and girth, and was perched upon long legs that seemed too thin for the weight of his body.

A widower, he lived alone with his maid and his two menservants on his farm, which he directed in sly, jovial fashion, careful of his interests, attending to business affairs, the breeding of the cattle, and the cultivation of the land. His two sons and three daughters, married to advantage, lived in the neighborhood, and came, once a month, to dine with their father. His vigor was known in all the country about; people said, as if it were a proverb: "He is as strong as Saint Anthony."

When the Prussian invasion occurred, Saint Anthony, at the inn, promised to eat an army, for, like a true Norman, he was a romancer, and a little of a coward and a blusterer. He brought his heavy fist down on the wooden table, making it jump, while the cups and glasses danced, and he cried out, with red face and cunning eye, in the false anger of the jovial fellow: "In Heaven's name! Will it be necessary to eat some of them?" He counted on the Prussians not coming any farther than Tanneville; but when he learned that they were at Rautot, he would not go out of his house, and he watched without ceasing through the little window of his

kitchen, expecting every moment to see the glint of bayonets.

One morning, as he was eating soup with his servants, the door opened and the mayor of the commune, Master Chicot, appeared, followed by a soldier, wearing on his head a black cap set off with a point of copper. Saint Anthony arose with a bound; everybody looked at him, expecting to see him cut the Prussian in pieces; but he contented himself with shaking hands with the mayor, who said to him: "Here's one of 'em for you to take care of, Saint Anthony. They came in the night. I haven't been surly with them, seeing they talk of shooting and burning if the least thing happens. You are warned. Give him something to eat. He seems a good lad. I am going to the other houses to seek quarters for the rest of them. There is enough for everybody." And he went out.

Father Anthony looked at his Prussian and grew pale. He was a great boy, fat and white, with blue eyes and blond hair, bearded up to the cheekbones, and he seemed stupid and timid, like a good child. The Norman rogue comprehended him immediately, as he thought, and, reassured, made him a sign to sit down. Then he asked: "Will you have some soup?"

The stranger did not understand. Anthony then made an audacious move, and, pushing a full plate under the nose of his unexpected guest, he said: "There, eat that, you big pig!"

The soldier responded: "*Ja*," and began to eat ravenously, while the farmer, triumphant, feeling his power recognized, winked his eye at his servants, who

made strange faces and had a great desire to laugh but were restrained by fear.

When the Prussian had cleared his plate, Saint Anthony served him another, the contents of which disappeared like the first, but he recoiled before the third helping, which the farmer tried by force to make him eat, repeating: "Come, now, put that inside of you. You shall grow fat, or I'll know the reason why, my pig!"

And the soldier, comprehending nothing except that he was urged to eat all he wanted, laughed with a contented air, making a sign that he was full.

Then Saint Anthony, suddenly becoming familiar, tapped him on the front, saying: "He has enough in his paunch, has my pig!" But upon this he doubled himself with laughter, growing red enough for an attack of apoplexy, and was unable to speak for a moment. An idea had seized him which suffocated him with laughter: "That's it! That's it!" he cried, "Saint Anthony and his pig! I am Saint Anthony and this is my pig!" And the three servants laughed loudly in their turn.

The old man was so pleased with his jest that he ordered the maid to bring some brandy, of the ten-year-old brand, with which he regaled everybody. They drank with the Prussian, who smacked his lips as a bit of delicate flattery, in order to indicate that he found it delicious. And Saint Anthony cried out in his face: "Yes! This is something fine! You don't find anything like it at home, my pig!"

After this, father Anthony never went out without his Prussian. He had found his opportunity. It was vengeance to

him, the vengeance of a great rogue. And all the people of the countryside, who were trembling with fear, laughed until in torture, behind the backs of their conquerors, at the farce of Saint Anthony and his pig. Indeed, as a joke, they thought it had not its equal. He had only to say a few things like this: "Go along, pig! Go!" in order to provoke convulsions of merriment.

He would go among his neighbors every afternoon with his German, their arms around each other, and would present him with a gay air, tapping him on the shoulder and saying: "See! Here is my pig! Look at him and tell me if you think he is getting fat, this here animal!"

And the peasants fairly bubbled with laughter—he was such a wag, this rogue of an Anthony!

"I'll sell him to you, Cæsar," he would say, "for three pistoles."

"I take him, Anthony, and invite you to come and have some of the pudding."

"Me," said Anthony, "what I want is some of the feet."

"Punch his body and see how fat he is!" said Cæsar.

And everybody would wink slyly, not laughing too much, however, for fear the Prussian might surmise finally that they were mocking him. Anthony alone, growing bolder every day, would pinch the calves of his legs, crying out: "Nothing but fat!" or strike him on the back and shout: "There's some good bacon!" Then the old man, capable of lifting an anvil, would seize him in his arms and raise him up in the air, declaring: "He weighs six hundred and not a bit of waste!"

He got into the habit of offering his

pig something to eat wherever they went. It was the great pleasure, the great diversion of every day. "Give him whatever you like," he would say, "he will swallow it." And when they would inquire if the man wished some bread and butter, potatoes, cold mutton, or venison, Anthony would say to him: "Here you are now, it's your choice!"

The soldier, stupid and gentle, ate for politeness, enchanted with so much attention; he would make himself sick rather than refuse; and he was growing fat truly, too stout for his uniform, which fairly delighted Saint Anthony, who kept telling him: "You know, my pig, it's pretty soon going to be necessary for you to have a new cage."

They became apparently the best friends in the world. And when the old man went on business into the surrounding country, the Prussian accompanied him of his own accord, for the sole pleasure of being with him.

The weather was very rigorous; it had frozen hard; the terrible winter of 1870 seemed to throw all plagues together upon France.

Father Anthony, who looked out for things ahead and took advantage of opportunities, foreseeing that he would need manure for his spring work, bought some of a neighbor who found himself in straits; he arranged to go each evening with his cart and bring it home, a load at a time. And so, toward evening of each day, he was to be seen on the way to Haules's farm, half a mile distant, always accompanied by his pig. And everybody ran along with them, as they go on Sunday to a grand mass, for each day was a feast-day for feeding the animal.

But the time came when the soldier began to be suspicious. And, when they laughed too much he rolled his eyes as if disturbed, and sometimes they sent forth a spark of anger.

One evening, when he had eaten to the extent of his capacity, he refused to swallow another morsel, and undertook to start up and go away. But Saint Anthony stopped him with a blow on the wrist and, placing his two hands on the Prussian's shoulders, he sat him down again so hard that the chair cracked under him.

A perfect tempest of gaiety followed; and Anthony, radiant, picked up his pig, rubbing the wounded spot, with the semblance of healing it. Then he declared: "Since you won't eat, you shall drink, by jiminy!" And somebody went to the alehouse for brandy.

The soldier rolled his eyes in wicked fashion; but he drank, nevertheless, as much as they wished; and Saint Anthony held his head; to the great amusement of his assistants.

The Norman, red as a tomato, with fiery eye, filled the glasses, drinking and guying him with: "To your sweetheart!" And the Prussian, without a word, encompassed glass after glass of these bumpers of cognac.

It was a struggle, a battle, a defense! In Heaven's name! who could drink the most? They could take no more, either of them, when the bottle was drained, but neither was conquered. They were neck and neck, and that was all. It would be necessary to start over the next day.

They went out stumbling, and started homeward beside the cart filled with manure, which two horses dragged!

slowly along. The snow began to fall, and the night, without a moon, seemed to shed a sad light over this death of the plains. The cold took hold of the two men, increasing their drunkenness, and Saint Anthony, discontented at not having triumphed, amused himself with pushing his pig by the shoulder, trying to make him fall over into the ditch. The man evaded the attacks by retreat; and each time he would mutter some German words in an irritated tone, which made the farmer laugh heartily. Finally, the Prussian became angry; and just at the moment when Anthony gave him another push, he responded with a terrible blow of the fist which made the old colossus totter.

Then, inflamed with brandy, the old fellow seized the man by the arms and shook him for some seconds, as if he had been a child, and then threw him with all his might to the other side of the road. Content with his execution, he folded his arms and laughed in good earnest.

But the soldier got up quickly, bare-headed, his cap having rolled off, and, drawing his sword, made a plunge for father Anthony. When the farmer saw this he seized his great fork of yellow holly, strong and supple as a beef tendon.

The Prussian came on with his head lowered, weapon in front of him, sure of killing his foe. But the old man, grasping with firm hand the blade whose point was aimed to pierce his body, turned it aside, and struck his enemy such a sharp blow upon the temple, with the point of the fork, that he fell at his feet. Then the peasant looked at his fallen foe frightened, stupefied with

astonishment, seeing the body shaken with spasms at first, and then lying motionless upon its face. He stooped, turned him over and looked at him a long time. The man's eyes were closed, and a little stream of blood was running from a hole in the forehead. In spite of the darkness, father Anthony could distinguish the brown spot of blood on the snow.

He remained there, bewildered, while his cart went on at the horses' regular step. What was to be done? He would shoot him! Then the Prussians would burn his place and work ruin throughout the country! But what should he do? What should he do? How conceal the body, conceal the death, deceive the Prussians? He could hear voices in the distance, in the silence of the snow-storm. Then he became excited, and, seizing the cap, he put it on the man's head again; and, taking him by the back, he raised him up, ran, overtook his team, and threw the body on the manure. Once at home, he could think what to do.

He went along with short steps, racking his brain but unable to decide anything. He understood the matter and felt sure that he was lost. Finally he came to his house. A bright light shone through a dormer window; his servant was not yet asleep. Then he made his wagon back quickly to the edge of a hole in the field. He thought by overturning the load the body would fall underneath, in the ditch; and he tipped the cart over. As he had thought, the man was buried under the manure. Anthony evened off the heap with his fork, and stuck it in the ground at the side. He called his manservant, ordered him

to put the horses in the stable, and went to his chamber.

He went to bed, reflecting continually upon what he had done, but no helpful idea came to him, and his fear increased when he was quiet in bed. The Prussians would shoot him! The sweat of fear started out upon him; his teeth chattered; he got up, shivering so that he could scarcely hold his clothes to get into them. He went down into the kitchen, took a bottle of liquor from the sideboard, and went back to his chamber. He drank two large glasses of liquor in succession, adding a new drunkenness to the old one, without calming the agony of his soul. He felt that he had made a pretty mess of it this time!

He walked the floor to and fro, seeking a ruse or explanation for his wickedness. And from time to time he would rinse his mouth with a draught of the ten-year-old cognac to put some heart into his body. But he could think of nothing, nothing. Toward midnight, his watchdog, a kind of half wolf, which he called "Devour," began the howl of death. Father Anthony trembled to the marrow. And each time that the beast began his long, mournful wail again, a shiver of fear would run along the skin of the old man.

He had fallen upon a chair, with weak knees; he was besotted, unable to do more, expecting that Devour would continue his wailing, and his nerves were played upon by every form of fear that could set them vibrating. The clock downstairs struck five. The dog was still howling, and the farmer was becoming mad. He got up and started to unchain the animal, so that he might no

longer listen to it. He went downstairs, opened the door, and went out into the night.

The snow was falling still. All was white. The farm buildings were great, black spots. As he approached the kennel, the dog pulled on his chain. He loosed him. Then, Devour made a bound, stopped short, with hair bristling, paws trembling, smelling the air, his nose turned toward the manure heap.

Saint Anthony trembled from head to foot, muttering: "What's the matter with you, dirty beast?" And he advanced some steps, casting a penetrating eye through the uncertain shadows, the undefined shadows of the courtyard. Then he saw the form of a man seated on his manure-heap!

He looked at the figure, and gasped with horror, motionless. But suddenly he perceived near him the handle of his fork stuck in the earth. He pulled it from the soil, and, in one of those transports of fear which make cowardly men more bold, he rushed on with it, to see who the man was.

It was he, the Prussian, soiled from his bed of manure, the warmth of which had revived him and partly brought him back to his senses. He had seated himself mechanically, and was resting there upon the snow which had powdered him well, over the filth and blood, still besotted by drunkenness, stunned by the blow, and exhausted from his wounds.

He perceived Anthony and, too much stupefied to understand anything, he made a movement as if to rise. The old man, as soon as he recognized him, fumed like a wild beast. He sputtered: "Ah! pig! pig! you are not dead! you have come to denounce me right away—

Wait—wait!” And throwing himself upon the German, he raised his four-pointed fork like a lance and brought it down, with all the force of his two arms, in the man’s breast, even to the handle. The soldier turned over on his back with a long death-sigh, while the old farmer drew the weapon from the wound and replunged it in the body, blow upon blow, striking like a madman, stamping with his feet upon the head and the rest of the body, which was still palpitating, and from which the blood spouted in great jets.

Then he stopped, overcome with the violence of his effort, breathing the air in great draughts, appeased by the accomplishment of his deed.

As the cocks began to crow in the poultry-yard, and the day was dawning, he set himself to work to bury the man. He dug into the manure-heap, until he came to earth, then dug still deeper, working in a disorderly fashion, with furious force in his arms and his whole body. When the trench was long enough, he rolled the dead body into it with the fork, replaced the earth, kicking it about

until it was level, put the manure over it again, and smiled to see the snow thicken and complete his work, wholly covering all traces with its white veil.

Then he stuck his fork into the manure and returned to the house. His bottle was still half full upon the table. He emptied it with a gulp, threw himself upon the bed, and slept profoundly.

He awoke sobered, his mind calm and active, capable of judging the case and foreseeing results. At the end of an hour, he was scouring the country asking everybody the whereabouts of the soldier. He went to the officers, to find out, he said, why they had taken his man away.

As the Prussians knew nothing of the peculiar situation between the two men, they were not suspicious; and Anthony even directed the search, affirming that the Prussian had gone running after some petticoat nearly every evening.

An old refugee policeman, who kept an inn in a neighboring village, and who had a pretty daughter, was arrested on suspicion of being the murderer, and was shot.

A Lively Friend

THEY had been constantly in each other’s society for a whole winter in Paris. After having lost sight of each other, as generally happens in such cases, after leaving college, the two friends met again one night, long years after, already old and white-haired, the one a bachelor, the other married.

M. de Meroul lived six months in

Paris and six months in his little château at Tourbeville. Having married the daughter of a gentleman in the district, he had lived a peaceful, happy life with the indolence of a man who has nothing to do. With a calm temperament and a sedate mind, without any intellectual audacity or tendency toward revolutionary independence of thought, he

passed his time in mildly regretting the past, in deploring the morals and the institutions of to-day, and in repeating every moment to his wife, who raised her eyes to heaven, and sometimes her hands also, in token of energetic assent:

“Under what a government do we live, great God!”

Madame de Meroul mentally resembled her husband, just as if they had been brother and sister. She knew by tradition that one ought, first of all, to reverence the Pope and the King!

And she loved them and respected them from the bottom of her heart, without knowing them, with a poetic exaltation, with a hereditary devotion, with all the sensibility of a well-born woman. She was kindly in every feeling of her soul. She had no child, and was incessantly regretting it.

When M. de Meroul came across his old school-fellow Joseph Mouradour at a ball, he experienced from this meeting a profound and genuine delight, for they had been very fond of one another in their youth.

After exclamations of astonishment over the changes caused by age in their bodies and their faces, they had asked one another a number of questions as to their respective careers.

Joseph Mouradour, a native of the south of France, had become a councillor-general in his own neighborhood. Frank in his manners, he spoke briskly and without any circumspection, telling all his thoughts with sheer indifference to prudential considerations. He was a Republican, of that race of good-natured Republicans who make their own ease the law of their existence, and who carry

freedom of speech to the verge of brutality.

He called at his friend's address in Paris, and was immediately a favorite, on account of his easy cordiality, in spite of his advanced opinions. Madame de Meroul exclaimed:

“What a pity! such a charming man!”

M. de Meroul said to his friend, in a sincere and confidential tone: “You cannot imagine what a wrong you do to our country.” He was attached to his friend nevertheless, for no bonds are more solid than those of childhood renewed in later life. Joseph Mouradour chaffed the husband and wife, called them “my loving turtles,” and occasionally gave vent to loud declarations against people who were behind the age, against all sorts of prejudices and traditions.

When he thus directed the flood of his democratic eloquence, the married pair, feeling ill at ease, kept silent through a sense of propriety and good-breeding; then the husband tried to turn off the conversation in order to avoid any friction. Joseph Mouradour did not want to know anyone unless he was free to say what he liked.

Summer came round. The Merouls knew no greater pleasure than to receive their old friends in their country house at Tourbeville. It was an intimate and healthy pleasure, the pleasure of homely gentlefolk who had spent most of their lives in the country. They used to go to the nearest railway station to meet some of their guests, and drove them to the house in their carriage, watching for compliments on their district, on the rapid vegetation, on the condition of the roads in the department, on the cleanli-

ness of the peasant's houses, on the bigness of the cattle they saw in the fields. on everything that met the eye as far as the edge of the horizon.

They liked to have it noticed that their horses trotted in a wonderful manner for an animal employed a part of the year in field-work; and they awaited with anxiety the newcomer's opinion on their family estate, sensitive to the slightest word, grateful for the slightest gracious attention.

Joseph Mouradour was invited, and he announced his arrival. The wife and the husband came to meet the train, delighted to have the opportunity of doing the honors of their house.

As soon as he perceived them, Joseph Mouradour jumped out of his carriage with a vivacity which increased their satisfaction. He grasped their hands warmly, congratulated them, and intoxicated them with compliments.

He was quite charming in his manner as they drove along the road to the house; he expressed astonishment at the height of the trees, the excellence of the crops, and the quickness of the horse.

When he placed his foot on the steps in front of the château, M. de Meroul said to him with a certain friendly solemnity:

"Now you are at home."

Joseph Mouradour answered: "Thanks, old fellow; I counted on that. For my part, besides, I never put myself out with my friends. That's the only hospitality I understand."

Then he went up to his own room, where he put on the costume of a peasant, as he was pleased to describe it, and he came down again not very

long after, attired in blue linen, with yellow boots, in the careless rig-out of a Parisian out for a holiday. He seemed, too, to have become more common, more jolly, more familiar, having assumed along with his would-be rustic garb a free and easy swagger which he thought suited the style of dress. His new apparel somewhat shocked M. and Madame de Meroul, who even at home on their estate always remained serious and respectable, as the particle "de" before their name exacted a certain amount of ceremonial even with their intimate friends.

After lunch they went to visit the farms; and the Parisian stupefied the respectable peasant by talking to them as if he were a comrade of theirs.

In the evening, the curé dined at the house—a fat old priest, wearing his Sunday suit, who had been specially asked that day in order to meet the newcomer.

When Joseph saw him he made a grimace, then he stared at the priest in astonishment as if he belonged to some peculiar race of beings, the like of which he had never seen before at such close quarters. He told a few stories allowable enough with a friend after dinner, but apparently somewhat out of place in the presence of an ecclesiastic. He did not say, "Monsieur l'Abbé," but merely "Monsieur"; and he embarrassed the priest with philosophical views as to the various superstitions that prevailed on the surface of the globe.

He remarked:

"Your God, Monsieur, is one of those persons whom we must respect, but also one of those who must be discussed. Mine is called Reason; he has from

time immemorial been the enemy of yours."

The Merouls, greatly put out, attempted to divert his thoughts. The curé left very early.

Then the husband gently remarked:

"You went a little too far with that priest."

But Joseph immediately replied:

"That's a very good joke, too! Am I to bother my brains about a devil-dodger? At any rate, do me the favor of not ever again having such an old foggy to dinner. Confound his impudence!"

"But, my friend, remember his sacred character."

Joseph Mouradour interrupted him:

"Yes, I know. We must treat them like girls who get roses for being well behaved! That's all right, my boy! When these people respect my convictions, I will respect theirs!"

This was all that happened that day.

Next morning Madame de Meroul, on entering her drawing-room, saw lying on the table three newspapers which made her draw back in horror, "**Le** Voltaire," "La République Française," and "La Justice."

Presently Joseph Mouradour, still in his blue blouse, appeared on the threshold, reading "L'Intransigéant" attentively. He exclaimed:

"Here is a splendid article by Rochefort. That fellow is marvelous."

He read the article in a loud voice, laying so much stress on its most striking passages that he did not notice the entrance of his friend.

M. de Meroul had a paper in each hand: "Le Gaulois" for himself and "Le Clarion" for his wife.

The ardent prose of the master-writer who overthrew the empire, violently declaimed, recited in the accent of the south, rang through the peaceful drawing-room, shook the old curtains with their rigid folds, seemed to splash the walls, the large upholstered chairs, the solemn furniture fixed in the same position for the past century, with a hail of words, rebounding, impudent, ironical, and crushing.

The husband and the wife, the one standing, the other seated, listened in a state of stupor, so scandalized that they no longer even ventured to make a gesture. Mouradour flung out the concluding passage in the article as one sets off a stream of fireworks; then in an emphatic tone he remarked:

"That's a stinger, eh?"

But suddenly he perceived the two prints belonging to his friend, and he seemed himself for a moment overcome with astonishment. Then he came across to his host with great strides, demanding in an angry tone:

"What do you want to do with these papers?"

M. de Meroul replied in a hesitating voice:

"Why, these—these are my—my newspapers."

"Your newspapers! Look here, now, you are only laughing at me! You will do me the favor to read mine, to stir you up with a few new ideas, and, as for yours—this is what I do with them—"

And before his host, filled with confusion, could prevent him, he seized the two newspapers and flung them out through the window. Then he gravely placed "La Justice" in the hands of

Madame de Meroul and "Le Voltaire" in those of her husband, himself sinking into an armchair to finish "L'Intransigéant."

The husband and the wife, through feelings of delicacy; made a show of reading a little, then they handed back the Republican newspapers which they touched with their finger-tips as if they had been poisoned.

Then Mouradour burst out laughing and said:

"A week of this sort of nourishment, and I'll have you converted to my ideas."

At the end of a week, in fact, he ruled the house. He had shut the door on the curé, whom Madame de Meroul went to see in secret. He gave orders that neither the "Gaulois" nor the "Clarion" were to be admitted into the house, which a manservant went to get in a mysterious fashion at the post-office, and which, on his entrance, were hidden away under the sofa cushions. He regulated everything just as he liked, always charming, always good-natured, a jovial and all-powerful tyrant.

Other friends were about to come on a visit, religious people with Legitimist opinions. The master and mistress of the château considered it would be impossible to let them meet their lively guest, and not knowing what to do, announced to Joseph Mouradour one evening that they were obliged to go away from home for a few days about a little matter of business, and they begged of him to remain in the house alone.

He showed no trace of emotion, and replied:

"Very well: tis all the same to me; I'll wait here for you as long as you like. What I say is this—there need be no ceremony between friends. You're quite right to look after your own affairs—why the devil shouldn't you? I'll not take offense at your doing that, quite the contrary. It only makes me feel quite at my ease with you. Go, my friends—I'll wait for you."

M. and Madame de Meroul started next morning.

He is waiting for them.

The Blind Man

How is it that the sunlight gives us such joy? Why does this radiance when it falls on the earth fill us so much with the delight of living? The sky is all blue, the fields are all green, the houses all white; and our ravished eyes drink in those bright colors which bring mirthfulness to our souls. And then there springs up in our hearts a desire to dance, a desire to run, a desire to

sing, a happy lightness of thought, a sort of enlarged tenderness; we feel a longing to embrace the sun.

The blind, as they sit in the doorways, impassive in their eternal darkness remain as calm as ever in the midst of this fresh gaiety, and, not comprehending what is taking place around them, they continue every moment to stop their dogs from gamboling.

When, at the close of the day, they are returning home on the arm of a young brother or a little sister, if the child says: "It was a very fine day!" the other answers; "I could notice that 'twas fine. Lulu wouldn't keep quiet."

I have known one of these men whose life was one of the most cruel martyrdoms that could possibly be conceived.

He was a peasant, the son of a Norman farmer. As long as his father and mother lived, he was more or less taken care of; he suffered little save from his horrible infirmity; but as soon as the old people were gone, a life of atrocious misery commenced for him. A dependent on a sister of his, everybody in the farmhouse treated him as a beggar who is eating the bread of others. At every meal the very food he swallowed was made a subject of reproach against him; he was called a drone, a clown; and although his brother-in-law had taken possession of his portion of the inheritance, the soup was given to him grudgingly—just enough to save him from dying.

His face was very pale and his two big white eyes were like wafers. He remained unmoved in spite of the insults inflicted upon him, so shut up in himself that one could not tell whether he felt them at all.

Moreover, he had never known any tenderness, his mother had always treated him very unkindly, caring scarcely at all for him; for in country places the useless are obnoxious, and the peasants would be glad, like hens, to kill the infirm of their species.

As soon as the soup had been gulped down, he went to the door in summer time and sat down, to the chimney-corner in winter time, and, after that, never

stirred till night. He made no gesture, no movement; only his eyelids, quivering from some nervous affection, fell down sometimes over his white sightless orbs. Had he any intellect, any thinking faculty, any consciousness of his own existence? Nobody cared to inquire as to whether he had or no.

For some years things went on in this fashion. But his incapacity for doing anything as well as his impassiveness eventually exasperated his relatives, and he became a laughing-stock, a sort of martyred buffoon, a prey given over to native ferocity, to the savage gaiety of the brutes who surrounded him.

It is easy to imagine all the cruel practical jokes inspired by his blindness. And, in order to have some fun in return for feeding him, they now converted his meals into hours of pleasure for the neighbors and of punishment for the helpless creature himself.

The peasants from the nearest houses came to this entertainment; it was talked about from door to door, and every day the kitchen of the farmhouse was full of people. For instance, they put on the table in front of his plate, when he was beginning to take the soup, a cat or a dog. The animal instinctively scented out the man's infirmity, and, softly approaching, commenced eating noiselessly, lapping up the soup daintily; and when a rather loud licking of the tongue awakened the poor fellow's attention, it would prudently scamper away to avoid the blow of the spoon directed at it by the blind man at random!

Then the spectators, huddled against the walls, burst out laughing, nudged each other, and stamped their feet on the floor. And he, without ever uttering

a word, would continue eating with the aid of his right hand, while stretching out his left to protect and defend his plate.

At another time they made him chew corks, bits of wood, leaves, or even filth, which he was unable to distinguish.

After this, they got tired even of these practical jokes; and the brother-in-law, mad at having to support him always, struck him, cuffed him incessantly, laughing at the useless efforts of the other to ward off or return the blows. Then came a new pleasure—the pleasure of smacking his face. And the plowmen, the servant-girls, and even every passing vagabond were every moment giving him cuffs, which caused his eyelashes to twitch spasmodically. He did not know where to hide himself and remained with his arms always held out to guard against people coming too close to him.

At last he was forced to beg.

He was placed somewhere on the highroad on market-days, and, as soon as he heard the sound of footsteps or the rolling of a vehicle, he reached out his hat, stammering:

“Charity, if you please!”

But the peasant is not lavish, and, for whole weeks, he did not bring back a sou.

Then he became the victim of furious, pitiless hatred. And this is how he died.

One winter, the ground was covered with snow, and it froze horribly. Now his brother-in-law led him one morning at this season a great distance along the highroad in order that he might solicit alms. The blind man was left there all day, and, when night came on, the brother-in-law told the people of his

house that he could find no trace of the mendicant. Then he added:

“Pooh! best not bother about him! He was cold, and got some one to take him away. Never fear! he's not lost. He'll turn up soon enough to-morrow to eat the soup.”

Next day he did not come back.

After long hours of waiting, stiffened with the cold, feeling that he was dying, the blind man began to walk. Being unable to find his way along the road, owing to its thick coating of ice, he went on at random, falling into dikes, getting up again, without uttering a sound, his sole object being to find some house where he could take shelter.

But by degrees the descending snow made a numbness steal over him, and his feeble limbs being incapable of carrying him farther, he had to sit down in the middle of an open field. He did not get up again.

The white flakes which kept continually falling buried him, so that his body, quite stiff and stark, disappeared under the incessant accumulation of their rapidly thickening mass; and nothing any longer indicated the place where the corpse was lying.

His relatives made pretense of inquiring about him and searching for him for about a week. They even made a show of weeping.

The winter was severe, and the thaw did not set in quickly. Now, one Sunday, on their way to mass, the farmers noticed a great flight of crows, who were whirling endlessly above the open field, and then, like a shower of black rain, descended in a heap at the same spot, ever going and coming.

The following week these gloomy birds were still there. There was a crowd of them up in the air, as if they had gathered from all corners of the horizon; and they swooped down with a great cawing into the shining snow, which they filled curiously with patches of black, and in which they kept rummaging obstinately. A young fellow went to see what they were doing, and discovered

the body of the blind man, already half devoured, mangled. His wan eyes had disappeared, pecked out by the long voracious beaks.

And I can never feel the glad radiance of sunlit days without sadly remembering and gloomily pondering over the fate of the beggar so deprived of joy in life that his horrible death was a relief for all those who had known him.

The Impolite Sex

MADAME DE X. TO MADAME DE L.

ETRETAT, Friday.

MY DEAR AUNT,—I am going to pay you a visit without making much fuss about it. I shall be at Les Fresnes on the second of September, the day before the hunting season opens; I do not want to miss it, so that I may tease these gentlemen. You are very obliging, Aunt, and I would like you to allow them to dine with you, as you usually do when there are no strange guests, without dressing or shaving for the occasion, on the ground that they are fatigued.

They are delighted, of course, when I am not present. But I shall be there, and I shall hold a review, like a general, at the dinner-hour; and, if I find a single one of them at all careless in dress, no matter how little, I mean to send him down to the kitchen to the servant-maids.

The men of to-day have so little consideration for others and so little good manners that one must be always severe with them. We live indeed in an age

of vulgarity. When they quarrel with one another, they attack one another with insults worthy of street porters, and, in our presence, they do not conduct themselves even as well as our servants. It is at the seaside that you see this most clearly. They are to be found there in battalion, and you can judge them in the lump. Oh, what coarse beings they are!

Just imagine, in a train, one of them, a gentleman who looked well as I thought, at first sight, thanks to his tailor, was dainty enough to take off his boots in order to put on a pair of old shoes! Another, an old man, who was probably some wealthy upstart (these are the most ill-bred), while sitting opposite to me, had the delicacy to place his two feet on the seat quite close to me. This is a positive fact.

At the watering-places, there is an unrestrained outpouring of unmannerliness. I must here make one admission—that my indignation is perhaps due to the fact that I am not accustomed to associate as a rule with the sort of people one comes across here, for I should be

less shocked by their manners if I had the opportunity of observing them oftener. In the inquiry-office of the hotel I was nearly thrown down by a young man, who snatched the key over my head. Another knocked against me so violently without begging my pardon or lifting his hat, coming away from a ball at the Casino, that he gave me a pain in the chest. It is the same way with all of them. Watch them addressing ladies on the terrace: they scarcely ever bow. They merely raise their hands to their headgear. But indeed, as they are all more or less bald, it is the best plan.

But what exasperates and disgusts me especially is the liberty they take of talking publicly, without any precaution whatsoever, about the most revolting adventures. When two men are together, they relate to each other, in the broadest language and with the most abominable comments, really horrible stories, without caring in the slightest degree whether a woman's ear is within reach of their voices. Yesterday, on the beach, I was forced to go away from the place where I sat in order not to be any longer the involuntary confidant of an obscene anecdote, told in such immodest language that I felt as much humiliated as I was indignant at having heard it. Would not the most elementary good-breeding have taught them to speak in a lower tone about such matters when we are near at hand? Etretat is, moreover, the country of gossip and scandal. From five to seven o'clock you can see people wandering about in quest of nasty stories about others, which they retail from group to group. As you remarked to me, my dear Aunt, tittle-

tattle is the mark of petty individuals and petty minds. It is also the consolation of women who are no longer loved or sought after. It is enough for me to observe the women who are fondest of gossiping to be persuaded that you are quite right.

The other day I was present at a musical evening at the Casino, given by a remarkable artist, Madame Masson, who sings in a truly delightful manner. I took the opportunity of applauding the admirable Coquelin, as well as two charming boarders of the Vaudeville, M—— and Meillet. I was able, on the occasion, to see all the bathers collected together this year on the beach. There were not many persons of distinction among them.

One day I went to lunch at Yport. I noticed a tall man with a beard who was coming out of a large house like a castle. It was the painter, Jean Paul Laurens. He is not satisfied apparently with imprisoning the subjects of his pictures; he insists on imprisoning himself.

Then I found myself seated on the shingle close to a man still young, of gentle and refined appearance, who was reading some verses. But he read them with such concentration, with such passion, I may say, that he did not even raise his eyes toward me. I was somewhat astonished, and I asked the conductor of the baths, without appearing to be much concerned, the name of this gentleman. I laughed inwardly a little at this reader of rhymes: he seemed behind the age, for a man. This person, I thought, must be a simpleton. Well, Aunt, I am now infatuated about this stranger. Just fancy, his name is Sully Prudhomme! I turned round to look at

him at my ease, just where I sat. His face possesses the two qualities of calmness and elegance. As somebody came to look for him, I was able to hear his voice, which is sweet and almost timid. He would certainly not tell obscene stories aloud in public, or knock against ladies without apologizing. He is sure to be a man of refinement, but his refinement is of an almost morbid, vibrating character. I will try this winter to get an introduction to him.

I have no more news to tell you, my dear Aunt, and I must interrupt this letter in haste, as the post-hour is near. I kiss your hands and your cheeks.

Your devoted niece,

BERTHE DE X.

P.S.—I should add, however, by way of justification of French politeness, that our fellow-countrymen are, when traveling, models of good manners in comparison with the abominable English, who seem to have been brought up by stable-boys, so much do they take care not to incommode themselves in any way, while they always incommode their neighbors.

MADAME DE L. TO MADAME DE X.

LES FRESNES, Saturday.

MY DEAR CHILD,—Many of the things you have said to me are very reasonable, but that does not prevent you from being wrong. Like you, I used formerly to feel very indignant at the impoliteness of men, who, as I supposed, constantly treated me with neglect; but as I grew older and reflected on everything, putting aside coquetry and observing things without taking any part in them myself, I perceived this much—that if men are not always po-

lite, women are always indescribably rude.

We imagine that we should be permitted to do anything, my darling, and at the same time we consider that we have a right to the utmost respect, and in the most flagrant manner we commit actions devoid of that elementary good-breeding of which you speak with passion.

I find, on the contrary, that men have, for us, much consideration, as compared with our bearing toward them. Besides, darling, men must needs be, and are, what we make them. In a state of society where women are all true gentlewomen all men would become gentlemen.

Mark my words; just observe and reflect.

Look at two women meeting in the street. What an attitude each assumes toward the other! What disparaging looks! What contempt they throw into each glance! How they toss their heads while they inspect each other to find something to condemn! And, if the footpath is narrow, do you think one woman will make room for another, or will beg pardon as she sweeps by? When two men jostle each other by accident in some narrow lane, each of them bows and at the same time gets out of the other's way, while we women press against each other, stomach to stomach, face to face, insolently staring each other out of countenance.

Look at two women who are acquaintances meeting on a staircase before the drawing-room door of a friend of theirs to whom one has just paid a visit, and to whom the other is about to pay a visit. They begin to talk to each other,

and block up the passage. If anyone happens to be coming up behind them, man or woman, do you imagine that they will put themselves half an inch out of their way? Never! never!

I was waiting myself, with my watch in my hands, one day last winter, at a certain drawing-room door. Behind me two gentlemen were also waiting without showing any readiness to lose their temper, like me. The reason was that they had long grown accustomed to our unconscionable insolence.

The other day, before leaving Paris, I went to dine with no less a person than your husband in the Champs-Élysées, in order to enjoy the open air. Every table was occupied. The waiter asked us not to go, and there would soon be a vacant table.

At that moment, I noticed an elderly lady of noble figure, who, having paid the amount of her check, seemed on the point of going away. She saw me, scanned me from head to foot, and did not budge. For more than a full quarter of an hour she sat there, immovable, putting on her gloves, and calmly staring at those who were waiting like myself. Now, two young men who were just finishing their dinner, having seen me in their turn, quickly summoned the waiter in order to pay whatever they owed, and at once offered me their seats, even insisting on standing while waiting for their change. And, bear in mind, my fair niece, that I am no longer pretty, like you, but old and white-haired.

It is we (do you see?) who should be taught politeness; and the task would be such a difficult one that Hercules himself would not be equal to it. You speak to me about Etretat, and about

the people who indulge in "tittle-tattle" along the beach of that delightful watering-place. It is a spot now lost to me, a thing of the past, but I found much amusement there in days gone by.

There were only a few of us, people in good society, really good society, and a few artists, and we all fraternized. We paid little attention to gossip in those days.

Well, as we had no insipid Casino, where people only gather for show, where they talk in whispers, where they dance stupidly, where they succeed in thoroughly boring one another, we sought some other way of passing our evenings pleasantly. Now, just guess what came into the head of one of our husbandry? Nothing else than to go and dance each night in one of the farmhouses in the neighborhood.

We started out in a group with a street-organ, generally played by Le Poittevin, the painter, with a cotton nightcap on his head. Two men carried lanterns. We followed in procession, laughing and chattering like a pack of fools.

We woke up the farmer and his servant-maids and laboring men. We got them to make onion-soup (horror), and we danced under the apple-trees, to the sound of the barrel-organ. The cocks waking up began to crow in the darkness of the outhouses; the horses began prancing on the straw of their stables. The cool air of the country caressed our cheeks with the smell of grass and of new-mown hay.

How long ago it is! How long ago it is. It is thirty years since then!

I do not want you, my darling, to

come for the opening of the hunting season. Why spoil the pleasure of our friends by inflicting on them fashionable toilettes after a day of vigorous exer-

cise in the country? This is the way, child, that men are spoiled. I embrace you.

Your old aunt,

GENEVIEVE DE L.

The Corsican Bandit

THE road, with a gentle winding, reached the middle of the forest. The huge pine-trees spread above our heads a mournful-looking vault, and gave forth a kind of long, sad wail, while at either side their straight, slender trunks formed, as it were, an army of organ-pipes, from which seemed to issue the low, monotonous music of the wind through the tree-tops.

After three hours' walking there was an opening in this row of tangled branches. Here and there an enormous pine-parasol, separated from the others, opening like an immense umbrella, displayed its dome of dark green; then, all of a sudden, we gained the boundary of the forest, some hundreds of meters below the defile which leads into the wild valley of Niolo.

On the two projecting heights which commanded a view of this pass, some old trees, grotesquely twisted, seemed to have mounted with painful efforts, like scouts who had started in advance of the multitude heaped together in the rear. When we turned round we saw the entire forest stretched beneath our feet, like a gigantic basin of verdure, whose edges, which seemed to reach the sky, were composed of bare racks shutting in on every side.

We resumed our walk, and, ten min-

utes later, we found ourselves in the defile.

Then I beheld an astonishing landscape. Beyond another forest, a valley, but a valley such as I had never seen before, a solitude of stone ten leagues long, hollowed out between two high mountains, without a field or a tree to be seen. This was the Niolo valley, the fatherland of Corsican liberty, the inaccessible citadel, from which the invaders had never been able to drive out the mountaineers.

My companion said to me: "It is here, that all our bandits have taken refuge."

Ere long we were at the further end of this chasm, so wild, so inconceivably beautiful.

Not a blade of grass, not a plant—nothing but granite. As far as our eyes could reach we saw in front of us a desert of glittering stone, heated like an oven by a burning sun which seemed to hang for that very purpose right above the gorge. When we raised our eyes toward the crests we stood dazzled and stupefied by what we saw. They looked red and notched like festoons of coral, for all the summits are made of porphyry; and the sky overhead seemed violet, lilac, discolored by the vicinity of these strange mountains. Lower

down the granite was of scintillating gray, and under our feet it seemed rasped, pounded; we were walking over shining powder. At our right, along a long and irregular course, a tumultuous torrent ran with a continuous roar. And we staggered along under this heat, in this light, in this burning, arid, desolate valley cut by this ravine of turbulent water which seemed to be ever hurrying onward, without being able to fertilize these rocks, lost in this furnace which greedily drank it up without being penetrated or refreshed by it.

But suddenly there was visible at our right a little wooden cross sunk in a little heap of stones. A man had been killed there; and I said to my companion:

"Tell me about your bandits."

He replied:

"I knew the most celebrated of them, the terrible St. Lucia. I will tell you his history.

"His father was killed in a quarrel by a young man of the same district, it is said; and St. Lucia was left alone with his sister. He was a weak and timid youth, small, often ill, without any energy. He did not proclaim the *vendetta* against the assassin of his father. All his relatives came to see him, and implored of him to take vengeance; he remained deaf to their menaces and their supplications.

"Then, following the old Corsican custom, his sister, in her indignation, carried away his black clothes, in order that he might not wear mourning for a dead man who had not been avenged. He was insensible to even this outrage, and rather than take down from the rack his father's gun, which was still loaded,

he shut himself up, not daring to brave the looks of the young men of the district.

"He seemed to have even forgotten the crime, and he lived with his sister in the obscurity of their dwelling.

"But, one day, the man who was suspected of having committed the murder was about to get married. St. Lucia did not appear to be moved by this news; but, no doubt out of sheer bravado, the bridegroom, on his way to the church, passed before the two orphans' house.

"The brother and the sister, at their window, were eating little fried cakes when the young man saw the bridal procession moving past the house. Suddenly he began to tremble, rose up without uttering a word, made the sign of the cross, took the gun which was hanging over the fireplace, and went out.

"When he spoke of this later on, he said: 'I don't know what was the matter with me; it was like fire in my blood; I felt that I should do it, that in spite of everything, I could not resist, I concealed the gun in a cave on the road to Corte.'

"An hour later, he came back, with nothing in his hand, and with his habitual sad air of weariness. His sister believed that there was nothing further in his thoughts.

"But when night fell he disappeared.

"His enemy had, the same evening, to repair to Corte on foot, accompanied by his two bridesmen.

"He was pursuing his way, singing as he went, when St. Lucia stood before him, and looking straight in the murderer's face, exclaimed: 'Now is the time!' and shot him point-blank in the chest.

"One of the bridesmen fled; the other stared at the young man, saying:

" 'What have you done, St. Lucia?'

"Then he was going to hasten to Corte for help, but St. Lucia said in a stern tone:

" 'If you move another step, I'll shoot you through the legs.'

"The other, aware that till now he had always appeared timid, said to him: 'You would not dare to do it!' and he was hurrying off when he fell, instantaneously, his thigh shattered by a bullet.

"And St. Lucia, coming over to where he lay, said:

" 'I am going to look at your wound; if it is not serious, I'll leave you there; if it is mortal, I'll finish you off.'

"He inspected the wound, considered it mortal, and slowly re-loading his gun, told the wounded man to say a prayer, and shot him through the head.

"Next day he was in the mountains.

"And do you know what this St. Lucia did after this?

"All his family were arrested by the gendarmes. His uncle, the curé, who was suspected of having incited him to this deed of vengeance, was himself put into prison, and accused by the dead

man's relatives. But he escaped, took a gun in his turn, and went to join his nephew in the cave.

"Next, St. Lucia killed, one after the other, his uncle's accusers, and tore out their eyes to teach the others never to state what they had seen with their eyes.

"He killed all the relatives, all the connections of his enemy's family. He massacred during his life fourteen gendarmes, burned down the houses of his adversaries, and was up to the day of his death the most terrible of the bandits, whose memory we have preserved."

* * * * *

The sun disappeared behind Monte Cinto and the tall shadow of the granite mountain went to sleep on the granite of the valley. We quickened our pace in order to reach before night the little village of Albertaccio, nothing better than a heap of stones welded beside the stone flanks of a wild gorge. And I said as I thought of the bandit:

"What a terrible custom your *vendetta* is!"

My companion answered with an air of resignation:

"What would you have? A man must do his duty!"

The Duel

IN SOCIETY, they called him "The handsome Signoles." He called himself Viscount Gontram Joseph de Signoles.

An orphan and master of a sufficient fortune, he cut something of a figure, as the saying is. He had an attractive form, enough readiness of speech to

make some attempt at wit, a certain natural grace of manner, an air of nobility and pride, and a mustache which was both formidable and pleasant to the eye—a thing that pleases the ladies.

He was in demand in drawing-rooms, sought for by waltzers, and he inspired

in men that smiling enmity which one has for people of energetic physique. He was suspected of some love affairs which showed him capable of much discretion, for a young man. He lived happily, tranquil, in a state of moral well-being most complete. It was well known that he was good at handling a sword, and still better with a pistol.

"If I were to fight," he said, "I should choose a pistol. With that weapon, I am sure of killing my man."

Now, one evening, having escorted two young women, friends of his, to the theater, being also accompanied by their husbands, he offered them, after the play, an ice at Tortoni's. They had been there about ten minutes, when he perceived that a gentleman, seated at a neighboring table, gazed persistently at one of the ladies of his party. She seemed troubled and disturbed, lowering her eyes. Finally, she said to her husband:

"That man is staring me out of countenance. I do not know him; do you?"

The husband, who had seen nothing, raised his eyes but declared:

"No, not at all."

The young woman replied, half laughing, half angry: "It is very annoying; that individual is spoiling my ice."

The husband shrugged his shoulders, replying:

"Pshaw! Pay no attention to him. If we were to notice all the insolent people we meet, there would be no end to it."

But the Viscount arose brusquely. He could not allow this unknown man to spoil an ice he had offered. It was to him that the injury was addressed, as it

was through him and for him that his friends had entered this *café*. The affair, then, concerned him only. He advanced toward the man and said to him:

"You have, sir, a manner of looking at these ladies that is not to be tolerated. I beg to ask you to cease this attention."

The other replied: "So you command me to keep the peace, do you?"

With set teeth, the Viscount answered: "Take care, sir, or you will force me to forget myself!"

The gentleman replied with a single word, an obscene word which resounded from one end of the *café* to the other, and made each guest start with a sudden movement as if they were all on springs. Those that were in front turned around; all the others raised their heads; three waiters turned about on their heels as if on pivots; the two ladies at the counter bounded forward, then entirely turned their backs upon the scene, as if they had been two automatons obeying the same manipulation.

There was a great silence. Then, suddenly, a sharp noise rent the air. The Viscount had struck his adversary. Everybody got up to interpose. Cards were exchanged.

After the Viscount had returned home, he walked up and down his room at a lively pace for some minutes. He was too much agitated to reflect upon anything. One idea only hovered over his mind: "a duel"; and yet this idea awoke in him as yet, no emotion whatever. He had done what he ought to do; he had shown himself what he ought to be. People would talk of it,

approve of it, and congratulate him. He said aloud, in a high voice, as one speaks when he is much troubled in thought:

“What a beast that man is.”

Then he sat down and began to reflect. He would have to find some seconds in the morning. Whom should he choose? He thought over the people of his acquaintance who were the most celebrated and in the best positions. He took finally, Marquis de la Tour-Noire and Colonel Bourdin, a great lord and a soldier who was very strong. Their names would carry in the journals. He perceived that he was thirsty and he drank, one after the other, three glasses of water; then he began to walk again. He felt himself full of energy. By showing himself hot-brained, resolute in all things, by exacting rigorous, dangerous conditions, and by claiming a serious duel, a very serious one, his adversary would doubtless withdraw and make some excuses.

He took up the card which he had drawn from his pocket and thrown upon the table and re-read it as he had in the *café*, by a glance of the eye, and again in the cab, on returning home, by the light of a gas jet: “George Lamil, 51 Moncey street.” That was all.

He examined these assembled letters which appeared so mysterious to him, his senses all confused: George Lamil? Who was this man? What had he done? Why had he looked at that woman in such a way? Was it not revolting that a stranger, an unknown should come to trouble his life thus, at a blow, because he had been pleased to fix his insolent gaze upon a woman? And the Viscount repeated again, in a loud voice:

“What a brute.”

Then he remained motionless, standing, thinking, his look ever fixed upon the card. A certain anger against this piece of paper was awakened in him, a hateful anger which was mingled with a strange sentiment of malice. It was stupid, this whole story! He took a penknife which lay open at his hand, and pricked the card through the middle of the printed name, as if he were using a *poignard* upon some one.

So he must fight! Should he choose the sword or pistol, for he considered himself the insulted one. With the sword he risked less; but with the pistol, there was a chance of his adversary withdrawing. It is rarely that a duel with the sword is mortal, a reciprocal prudence hindering the combatants from keeping near enough to each other for the point to strike very deep; with the pistol he risked his life very seriously; but he could also meet the affair with all the honors of the situation and without arriving at a meeting. He said aloud:

“It is necessary to be firm. He will be afraid.”

The sound of his own voice made him tremble and he began to look about him. He felt very nervous. He drank still another glass of water, then commenced to undress, preparatory to retiring.

When he was ready, he put out his light and closed his eyes. Then he thought:

“I have all day to-morrow to busy myself with my affairs. I must sleep first, in order to be calm.”

He was very warm under the clothes, but he could not succeed in falling asleep. He turned and turned again,

remained for five minutes upon his back, then placed himself upon his left side, then rolled over to the right.

He was still thirsty. He got up and drank. Then a kind of disquiet seized him:

"Can it be that I am afraid?" said he.

Why should his heart begin to beat so foolishly at each of the customary noises about his room?—when the clock was going to strike and the spring made that little grinding noise as it raised itself to make the turn? And he found it was necessary for him to open his mouth in order to breathe for some seconds following this start, so great was his feeling of oppression. He began to reason with himself upon the possibilities of the thing:

"What have I to fear?"

No, certainly, he should not fear, since he was resolved to follow it out to the end and since he had fully made up his mind to fight without a qualm. But he felt himself so profoundly troubled that he asked himself:

"Can it be that I am afraid in spite of myself?"

And this doubt invaded him, this disquiet, this fear; if a force more powerful than his will, dominating, irresistible, should conquer him, what would happen to him? Yes, what would happen? Certainly he could walk upon the earth, if he wished to go there. But if he should tremble? And if he should lose consciousness? And he thought of his situation, of his reputation, of his name.

And a singular desire took possession of him to get up and look at himself in the glass. He relighted his candle. When he perceived his face reflected in the polished glass, he scarcely knew

himself, and it seemed to him that he had never seen himself before. His eyes appeared enormous; he was pale, certainly; he was pale, very pale.

He remained standing there before the mirror. He put out his tongue as if to examine the state of his health, and suddenly this thought entered his brain after the fashion of a bullet:

"After to-morrow at this time, I shall perhaps be dead."

And his heart began to beat furiously.

"After to-morrow at this time, I shall perhaps be dead. This person opposite me, this being I have so often seen in this glass, will be no more. How can it be! I am here, I see myself, I feel that I am alive, and in twenty-four hours I shall be stretched upon that bed, dead, my eyes closed, cold, inanimate, departed."

He turned around to the bed and distinctly saw himself stretched on his back in the same clothes he had worn on going out. In his face were the lines of death, and a rigidity in the hands that would never stir again.

Then a fear of his bed came over him, and in order to see it no more he passed into his smoking-room. Mechanically he took a cigar, lighted it, and began to walk about. He was cold. He went toward the bell to waken his valet; but he stopped with his hand on the cord:

"This man would perceive at once that I am afraid."

He did not ring, but made a fire. His hands trembled a little from a nervous shiver when they came in contact with any object. His mind wandered; his thoughts from trouble became frightened, hasty, and sorrowful; an intoxication seemed to invade his mind as if

he were drunk. And without ceasing he asked:

"What am I going to do? What is going to become of me?"

His whole body was vibrating, traversed by a jerking and a trembling; he got up and approached the window, opening the curtains.

The day had dawned, a summer day. A rose-colored sky made the city rosy on roof and wall. A great fall of spread out light, like a caress from the rising sun, enveloped the waking world; and, with this light, a gay, rapid, brutal hope invaded the heart of the Viscount! He was a fool to allow himself to be thus cast down by fear, even before anything was decided, before his witnesses had seen those of this George Lamil, before he yet knew whether he were going to fight a duel.

He made his toilette, dressed himself, and walked out with firm step.

He repeated constantly, in walking:

"It will be necessary for me to be energetic, very energetic. I must prove that I am not afraid."

His witnesses, the Marquis and the Colonel, placed themselves at his disposal and, after having shaken hands with him energetically, discussed the conditions. The Colonel asked:

"Do you wish it to be a serious duel?"

The Viscount responded: "Very serious."

The Marquis continued: "Will you use a pistol?"

"Yes."

"We leave you free to regulate the rest."

The Viscount enunciated, in a dry, jerky voice:

"Twenty steps at the order, and on raising the arm instead of lowering it. Exchange of bullets until one is grievously wounded."

The Colonel declared, in a satisfied tone:

"These are excellent conditions. You shoot well, all the chances are in your favor."

They separated. The Viscount returned home to wait for them. His agitation, appeased for a moment, grew now from minute to minute. He felt along his arms, his legs, and in his breast a kind of trembling, of continued vibration; he could not keep still, either sitting or standing. There was no longer an appearance of saliva in his mouth, and each instant he made a noisy movement with his tongue, as if to unglue it from the roof of his mouth.

He wished to breakfast but he could not eat. Then the idea came to him of drinking to give himself courage and he brought out a small bottle of rum, which he swallowed in six glasses, one after the other.

A heat, like that of a burning fire, invaded him, followed almost immediately by a numbness of the soul. He thought:

"I have found the remedy. Now all goes well."

But at the end of an hour, he had emptied the bottle and his state of agitation became intolerable. He felt a foolish impulse to roll on the ground, to cry out and bite. Then night fell.

A stroke of the bell gave him such a shock that he had not sufficient strength left to rise and receive his witnesses. He dared not even speak to them to say "Good evening," to pronounce a

single word, for fear that they would discover a change in his voice.

The Colonel announced:

"All is arranged according to the conditions that you have fixed upon. Your adversary claimed the privileges of the offended, but he soon yielded and accepted all. His witnesses are two military men."

The Viscount pronounced the word:

"Thanks."

The Marquis continued:

"Excuse us if we only come in and go out, for we have still a thousand things to occupy our attention. A good doctor will be necessary, since the combat is only to cease after a severe wound, and you know that bullets are no trifles. Then, a place must be found, in some proximity to a house, where we may carry the wounded, if necessary, etc., etc.; finally we have but two or three hours for it."

The Viscount, for the second time, articulated:

"Thanks."

The Colonel asked:

"How is it with you? Are you calm?"

"Yes, very calm, thank you."

The two men then retired.

When he again found himself alone, it seemed to him that he was mad. His domestic having lighted the lamps, he seated himself before his table to write some letters. After having traced, at the top of a page: "This is my testament—" he arose with a shake and put it away from him, feeling himself incapable of forming two ideas, or of sufficient resolution to decide what was to be done.

So he was going to fight a duel! There was no way to avoid it. How could he ever go through it? He wished to fight, it was his intention and firm resolution so to do; and yet, he felt, that in spite of all his effort of mind and all the tension of his will, he would not be able to preserve even the necessary force to go to the place of meeting. He tried to imagine the combat, his own attitude, and the position of his adversary.

From time to time, his teeth chattered in his mouth with a little hard noise. He tried to read, and took down the Chateauvillard code of dueling. Then he asked himself:

"Has my opponent frequently fought? Is he known? Is he classed? How am I to know?"

He remembered Baron de Vaux's book up experts with the pistol, and he ran through it from one end to the other. George Lamil was not mentioned. Nevertheless, if this man were not an expert, he would not so readily have accepted this dangerous weapon and these mortal conditions.

He opened, in passing, a box of Gastinne Renettes which stood on a little stand, took out one of the pistols, held it in a position to fire, and raised his arm. But he trembled from head to foot and the gun worked upon all his senses.

Then he said: "It is impossible. I cannot fight in this condition."

He looked at the end of the barrel, at that little black, deep hole that spits out death, he thought of the dishonor, of the whisperings in his circle, of the laughs in the drawing-rooms, of the scorn of the ladies, of the allusions of

the journals, of all the insults that cowards would throw at him.

He continued to examine the weapon, and, raising the cock, he suddenly saw a priming glittering underneath like a little red flame. The pistol was loaded then, through a chance forgetfulness. And he found in this discovery a confused, inexplicable joy.

If in the presence of the other man he did not have that calm, noble bearing that he should have, he would be lost forever. He would be spotted, branded with the sign of infamy, hunted from the world! And this calm, heroic bear-

ing he would not have, he knew it, he felt it. However, he was brave, since he did wish to fight! He was brave, since. . . . The thought that budded never took form, even in his own mind; for, opening his mouth wide he brusquely thrust the barrel of his pistol into his throat, and pulled the trigger. . . .

When his valet, hearing the report, hastened to him, he found him dead upon his back. A jet of blood had splashed upon the white paper on the table and made a great red spot upon these four words:

"This is my testament."

The Love of Long Ago

THE old-fashioned château was built on a wooded height. Tall trees surrounded it with dark greenery; and the vast park extended its vistas here over a deep forest and there over an open plain. Some little distance from the front of the mansion stood a huge stone basin in which marble nymphs were bathing. Other basins arranged in order succeeded each other down as far as the foot of the slope, and a hidden fountain sent cascades dancing from one to the other.

From the manor-house, which preserved the grace of a superannuated coquette, down to the grottos incrustated with shellwork, where slumbered the loves of a bygone age, everything in this antique demesne had retained the physiognomy of former days. Everything seemed to speak still of ancient customs, of the manners of long ago, of faded

gallantries, and of the elegant trivialities so dear to our grandmothers.

In a parlor in the style of Louis XV., the walls of which were covered with shepherds courting shepherdesses, beautiful ladies in hoop petticoats, and gallant gentlemen in wigs, a very old woman, who seemed dead as soon as she ceased to move, was almost lying down in a large easy-chair while her thin, mummy-like hands hung down, one at each side of her.

Her eyes were gazing languidly toward the distant horizon as if they sought to follow the park visions of her youth. Through the open window every now and then came a breath of air laden with the scent of grass and the perfume of flowers. It made her white locks flutter around her wrinkled forehead and old memories sweep through her brain.

Beside her on a tapestried stool, a

young girl, with long, fair hair hanging in plaits over her neck, was embroidering an altar-cloth. There was a pensive expression in her eyes, and it was easy to see that, while her agile fingers worked, her brain was busy with thoughts.

But the old lady suddenly turned her head.

"Berthe," she said, "read something out of the newspapers for me, so that I may still know sometimes what is happening in the world."

The young girl took up the newspaper, and cast a rapid glance over it.

"There is a great deal about politics, grandmamma; am I to pass it by?"

"Yes, yes, darling. Are there no accounts of love affairs? Is gallantry, then, dead in France that they no longer talk about abductions or adventures as they did formerly?"

The girl made a long search through the columns of the newspaper.

"Here is one," she said. "It is entitled, 'A Love-Drama.'"

The old woman smiled through her wrinkles. "Read that for me," she said.

And Berthe commenced. It was a case of vitriol-throwing. A wife, in order to avenge herself on her husband's mistress, had burned her face and eyes. She had left the Assize-Court acquitted, declared to be innocent, amid the applause of the crowd.

The grandmother moved about excitedly in her chair, and exclaimed:

"This is horrible—why, it is perfectly horrible! See whether you can find anything else to read for me, darling."

Berthe again made a search; and further down in the reports of criminal

cases at which her attention was still directed. She read:

"Gloomy Drama.—A shopgirl, no longer young, allowed herself to yield to the embraces of a young man. Then, to avenge herself on her lover, whose heart proved fickle, she shot him with a revolver. The unhappy man is maimed for life. The jury consisted of men of moral character, and took the part of the murderess—regarding her as the victim of illicit love. They honorably acquitted her."

This time, the old grandmother appeared quite shocked, and, in a trembling voice, said:

"Why, you are mad, then, nowadays. You are mad! The good God has given you love, the only allurements in life. Man has added to this gallantry, the only distraction of our dull hours, and here are you mixing up with vitriol and revolvers, as if one were to put mud into a flagon of Spanish wine."

Berthe did not seem to understand her grandmother's indignation.

"But, grandmamma, this woman avenged herself. Remember, she was married, and her husband deceived her."

The grandmother gave a start.

"What ideas have they been putting into the heads of you young girls of to-day?"

Berthe replied:

"But marriage is sacred, grandmamma."

The grandmother's heart, which had its birth in the great age of gallantry, gave a sudden leap.

"It is love that is sacred," she said. "Listen, child, to an old woman who has seen three generations and who has had a long, long experience of men and

women. Marriage and love have nothing in common. We marry to found a family, and we cannot dispense with marriage. If society is a chain, each family is a link in that chain. In order to weld those links, we always seek for metals of the same kind. When we marry, we must bring together suitable conditions; we must combine fortunes, unite similar races, and aim at the common interests, which are riches and children. We marry only once, my child, because the world requires us to do so, but we may love twenty times in one lifetime because nature has made us able to do this. Marriage, you see, is law, and love is an instinct, which impels us sometimes along a straight and sometimes along a crooked path. The world has made laws to combat our instincts—it was necessary to make them; but our instincts are always stronger, and we ought not to resist them too much, because they come from God, while the laws only come from men. If we did not perfume life with love, as much love as possible, darling, as we put sugar into drugs for children, nobody would care to take it just as it is."

Berthe opened her eyes widely in astonishment. She murmured:

"Oh! grandmamma, we can only love once."

The grandmother raised her trembling hands toward Heaven, as if again to invoke the defunct god of gallantries. She exclaimed indignantly:

"You have become a race of serfs, a race of common people. Since the Revolution, it is impossible any longer to recognize society. You have at-

tached big words to every action, and wearisome duties to every corner of existence; you believe in equality and eternal passion. People have written verses telling you that people have died of love. In my time, verses were written to teach men to love every woman. And we!—when we liked a gentleman, my child, we sent him a page. And when a fresh caprice came into our hearts, we were not slow in getting rid of the last lover—unless we kept both of them."

The old woman smiled with a keen smile, and a gleam of roguery twinkled in her gray eye, the sprightly, sceptical roguery of those people who did not believe that they were made of the same clay as the others, and who lived as rulers for whom common restrictions were not made.

The young girl, turning very pale, faltered out:

"So then, women have no honor."

The grandmother ceased to smile. If she had kept in her soul some of Voltaire's irony, she had also a little of Rousseau's glowing philosophy: "No honor! because we loved, and dared to say so, and even boasted of it? But, my child, if one of us, among the greatest ladies in France, were to live without a lover, she would have the entire court laughing at her. Those who wished to live differently had only to enter a convent. And you imagine perhaps that your husbands will love you alone all their lives. As if, indeed, this could be the case. I tell you that marriage is a thing necessary in order that society should exist. but it is not in the nature of our race, do you understand? There is only one good thing in life, and that is love. And how you misunderstand

it! how you spoil it! You treat it as something solemn, like a sacrament, or something to be bought, like a dress."

The young girl caught the old woman's trembling hands in her own.

"Hold your tongue, I beg of you, grandmamma!"

And, on her knees, with tears in her eyes, she prayed to Heaven to bestow on her a great passion, one eternal passion

alone, in accordance with the dream of modern poets, while her grandmother, kissing her on the forehead, still penetrated by that charming, healthy logic by which philosophers of gallantry sprinkled salt upon the life of the eighteenth century, murmured:

"Take care, my poor darling! If you believe in such follies as this, you will be very unhappy."

The Farmer's Wife

ONE day Baron René du Treilles said to me:

"Will you come and open the hunting season with me in my farmhouse at Marinville? By doing so, my dear fellow, you will give me the greatest pleasure. Besides, I am all alone. This will be a hard hunting-bout, to start with, and the house where I sleep is so primitive that I can only bring my most intimate friends there."

I accepted his invitation. So on Saturday we started by the railway-line running into Normandy, and alighted at the station of Alvimare. Baron René, pointing out to me a country jaunting-car drawn by a restive horse, driven by a big peasant with white hair, said to me:

"Here is our equipage, my dear boy."

The man extended his hand to his landlord, and the Baron pressed it warmly, asking:

"Well, Maître Lebrument, how are you?"

"Always the same, M'sieu l' Baron."

"We jumped into this hencoop sus-

pended and shaken on two immense wheels. The young horse, after a violent swerve, started into a gallop, flinging us into the air like balls. Every fall backward on to the wooden bench gave me the most dreadful pain.

The peasant kept repeating in his calm, monotonous voice:

"There, there! it's all right, all right, Moutard, all right!"

But Moutard scarcely heard and kept scampering along like a goat.

Our two dogs behind us, in the empty part of the hencoop, stood erect and sniffed the air of the plains as if they could smell the game.

The Baron gazed into the distance, with a sad eye. The vast Norman landscape, undulating and melancholy as an immense English park, with farmyards surrounded by two or four rows of trees and full of dwarfed apple-trees which rendered the houses invisible, gave a vista, as far as the eye could see, of old forest-trees, tufts of wood and hedgerows, which artistic gardeners pro-

vide for when they are tracing the lines of princely estates.

And René de Treilles suddenly exclaimed:

"I love this soil; I have my very roots in it."

A pure Norman, tall and strong, with the more or less projecting paunch of the old race of adventurers who went to found kingdoms on the shores of every ocean, he was about fifty years of age, ten years less perhaps than the farmer who was driving us. The latter was a lean peasant, all skin and bone, one of those men who live a hundred years.

After two hours' traveling over stony roads, across that green and monotonous plain, the vehicle entered one of those fruit-gardens which adorn the fronts of farmhouses, and drew up before an old structure falling into decay, where an old maid-servant stood waiting at the side of a young fellow who seized the horse's bridle.

We entered the farmhouse. The smoky kitchen was high and spacious. The copper utensils and the earthenware glistened under the reflection of the big fire. A cat lay asleep under the table. Within, you inhaled the odor of milk, of apples, of smoke, that indescribable smell peculiar to old houses where peasants have lived—the odor of the soil, of the walls, of furniture, of stale soup, of washing, and of the old inhabitants, the smell of animals and human beings intermingled, of things and of persons, the odor of time and of things that have passed away.

I went out to have a look at the farmyard. It was big, full of old apple-trees dwarfed and crooked, and laden with fruit which fell on the grass around

them. In this farmyard the smell of apples was as strong as that of the orange-trees which blossom on the banks of southern rivers.

Four rows of beeches surrounded this inclosure. They were so tall that they seemed to touch the clouds, at this hour of nightfall, and their summits, through which the night winds passed, shook and sang a sad, interminable song.

I re-entered the house. The Baron was warming his feet at the fire and was listening to the farmer's talk about country matters. He talked about marriages, births, and deaths, then about the fall in the price of corn and the the latest news about the selling value of cattle. The "Veularde" (as he called a cow that had been bought at the fair of Veules) had calved in the middle of June. The cider had not been first-class last year. The apricot-apples were almost disappearing from the country.

Then we had dinner. It was a good rustic meal, simple and abundant, long and tranquil. And while we were dining, I noticed the special kind of friendly familiarity between the Baron and the peasant which had struck me from the start.

Without, the beeches continued sobbing in the nightwind, and our two dogs shut up in a shed were whining and howling in uncanny fashion. The fire was dying out in the big grate. The maid-servant had gone to bed. Maître Lebrument said in his turn:

"If you don't mind, M'sieu l' Baron, I'm going to bed. I am not used to staying up late."

The Baron extended his hand toward him and said: "Go, my friend," in so

cordial a tone that I said, as soon as the man had disappeared:

"He is devoted to you, this farmer?"

"Better than that, my dear fellow! It is a drama, an old drama, simple and very sad, that attaches him to me. Here is the story:

"You know my father was a colonel in a cavalry regiment. His orderly was this young fellow, now an old man, the son of a farmer. Then, when my father retired from the army, he took this retired soldier, then about forty, as his servant. I was at that time about thirty. We lived then in our old chateau of Valrenne near Caudebec-in-Caux.

"At this period, my mother's chambermaid was one of the prettiest girls you could see, fair-haired, slender, and sprightly in manner, a genuine specimen of the fascinating Abigail, such as we scarcely ever find nowadays. Today these creatures spring up into husies before their time. Paris, with the aid of the railways, attracts them, calls them, takes hold of them as soon as they are bursting into womanhood—these little wenches, who, in old times, remained simple maid-servants. Every man passing by, as long ago recruiting sergeants did with conscripts, entices and debauches them—foolish lassies—till now we have only the scum of the female sex for servant-maids, all that is dull, nasty, common, and ill-formed, too ugly even for gallantry.

"Well, this girl was charming, and I often gave her a kiss in dark corners—nothing more, I swear to you! She was virtuous, besides; and I had some respect for my mother's house, which is more than can be said of the blackguards of the present day.

"Now it happened that my father's man-servant, the ex-soldier, the old farmer you have just seen, fell in love with this girl, but in an unusual sort of way. The first thing we noticed was that his memory was affected; he did not pay attention to anything.

"My father was incessantly saying: 'Look here, Jean! What's the matter with you? Are you unwell?'

"'No, no, M'sieu l' Baron. There's nothing the matter with me.'

"Jean got thin. Then, when serving at table, he broke glasses and let plates fall. We thought he must have been attacked by some nervous malady, and we sent for the doctor, who thought he could detect symptoms of spinal disease. Then my father, full of anxiety about his faithful man-servant, decided to place him in a private hospital. When the poor fellow heard of my father's intentions, he made a clean breast of it.

"'M'sieu l' Baron—'

"'Well, my boy?'

"'You see, the thing I want is not physic.'

"'Ha! what is it, then?'

"'It's marriage!'

"My father turned round and stared at him in astonishment.

"'What's that you say—eh?'

"'It's marriage.'

"'Marriage? So then, you donkey, you're in love.'

"'That's how it is, M'sieu l' Baron.'

"And my father began to laugh in such an immoderate fashion that my mother called through the wall of the next room:

"'What in the name of goodness is the matter with you, Gontran?'

"My father replied:

"Come here, Catherine."

"And when she came in, he told, with tears in his eyes from sheer laughter, that his idiot of a servant-man was love-sick.

"But my mother, instead of laughing, was deeply affected.

"Who is it that you have fallen in love with, my poor fellow?" she asked.

"He answered, without hesitation:

"With Louise, Madame la Baronne."

"My mother said, with the utmost gravity: 'We must try to arrange the matter the best way we can.'

"So Louise was sent for, and questioned by my mother. She said in reply that she knew all about Jean's liking for her, that in fact Jean had spoken to her about it several times, but that she did not want him. She refused to say why.

"And two months elapsed during which my father and mother never ceased to urge this girl to marry Jean. As she declared she was not in love with any other man, she could not give any serious reason for her refusal. My father, at last, overcome her resistance by means of a big present of money, and started the pair of them on a farm on the estate—this very farm. At the end of three years, I learned that Louise had died of consumption. But my father and my mother died, too, in their turn, and it was two years more before I found myself face to face with Jean.

"At last, one autumn day, about the end of October, the idea came into my head to go hunting on this part of my estate, which my tenant had told me was full of game.

"So, one evening, one wet evening, I arrived at this house. I was shocked

to find the old soldier who had been my father's servant perfectly white-haired, though he was not more than forty-five or forty-six years of age. I made him dine with me, at the very table where we're now sitting. It was raining hard. We could hear the rain battering at the roof, the walls, and the windows, flowing in a perfect deluge into the farm-yard; and my dog was howling in the shed where the other dogs are howling to-night.

"All of a sudden, when the servant-maid had gone to bed, the man said in a timid voice:

"M'sieu l' Baron."

"What is it, my dear Jean?"

"I have something to tell you."

"Tell it, my dear Jean."

"You remember Louise, my wife?"

"Certainly, I do remember her."

"Well, she left me a message for you."

"What was it?"

"A—a—well, it was what you might call a confession."

"Ha! And what was it about?"

"It was—it was—I'd rather, all the same, tell you nothing about it—but I must—I must. Well, it's this—it wasn't consumption she died of at all. It was grief—well, that's the long and the short of it. As soon as she came to live here, after we were married, she grew thin; she changed so that you wouldn't know her at the end of six months—no, you wouldn't know her, M'sieu l' Baron. It was all just as before I married her, but it was different, too, quite another sort of thing.

"I sent for the doctor. He said it was her liver that was affected—he said it was what he called a "hepatic"

complaint—I don't know these big words M'sieu l' Baron. Then I bought medicine for her, heaps on heaps of bottles, that cost about three hundred francs. But she'd take none of them; she wouldn't have them; she said: "It's no use, my poor Jean; it wouldn't do me any good." I saw well that she had some hidden trouble; and then I found her one time crying and I didn't know what to do—no, I didn't know what to do. I bought caps and dresses and hair-oil and earrings for her. No good! And I saw that she was going to die. And so one night in the end of November, one snowy night, after remaining the whole day without stirring out of the bed, she told me to send for the curé. So I went for him. As soon as he had come, she saw him. Then, she asked him to let me come into the room and she said to me: "Jean, I'm going to make a confession to you. I owe it to you, Jean. I have never been false to you, never!—never, before or after you married me. M'sieu le Curé is there, and can tell it is so, and he knows my soul. Well, listen, Jean. If I am dying, it is because I was not able to console myself for leaving the château—because—I was too—too fond of the young Baron, Monsieur René—too fond of him, mind you, Jean,—there was no harm in it! This is the thing that's killing me. When I could see him no more, I felt that I should die. If I could only have seen him, I might have lived; only seen him, nothing more. I wish you'd tell it to him some day, by-and-by, when I am no longer here. You will tell him—swear you will, Jean—swear it in the presence of M'sieu le Curé! It will console me to know that

he will know it one day—that this was the cause of my death! Swear it!"

"Well, I gave her my promise, M'sieu l' Baron! and, on the faith of an honest man, I have kept my word."

"And then he ceased speaking, his eyes filling with tears.

* * * * *

"Upon my soul, my dear boy, you can't form any idea of the emotion that filled me when I heard this poor devil, whose wife I had caused the death of without knowing it, telling me this story on that wet night in this very kitchen.

"I exclaimed: "Ah! my poor Jean! my poor Jean!"

"He murmured: 'Well, that's all, M'sieu l' Baron. I could do nothing, one way or another—and now its all over!'"

"I caught his hand across the table, and I began to cry.

"He asked: 'Will you come and see her grave?' I nodded by way of assent, for I couldn't speak. He rose up, lighted a lantern, and we walked through the blinding rain which, in the light of the lamp, looked like falling arrows.

"He opened a gate, and I saw some crosses of blackwood.

"Suddenly, he said: 'There it is, in front of a marble slab,' and he flashed the lantern close to it so that I could read the inscription:

"TO LOUISE-HORTENSE MARINET,
WIFE of *Jean-François Lebrument*,
farmer.

She was a faithful Wife! God
rest her Soul!"

"We fell on our knees in the damp grass, he and I, with the lantern be-

tween us, and I saw the rain beating on the white marble slab. And I thought of the heart of her sleeping there in her grave. Ah! poor heart! poor heart!

* * * * *

"Since then, I have been coming here every year. And I don't know why, but I feel as if I were guilty of some crime in the presence of this man who always shows that he forgives me!"

Beside a Dead Man

HE was slowly dying, as consumptives die. I saw him sitting down every day at two o'clock under the windows of the hotel, facing the tranquil sea, on an open-air bench. He remained for some time without moving, in the heat of the sun, gazing mournfully at the Mediterranean. Every now and then he cast a glance at the lofty mountain with vaporous summits which shuts in Mentone; then, with a very slow movement, he crossed his long legs, so thin that they seemed two bones, around which fluttered the cloth of his trousers, and opened a book, which was always the same. And then he did not stir any more, but read on, read on with his eye and with his mind; all his poor expiring body seemed to read, all his soul plunged, lost itself, disappeared, in this book, up to the hour when the cool air made him cough a little. Then he got up and re-entered the hotel.

He was a tall German, with a fair beard, who breakfasted and dined in his own room, and spoke to nobody.

A vague curiosity attracted me to him. One day I sat down by his side, having taken up a book, too, to keep up appearances, a volume of Musset's poems.

And I began to run through "Rolla."

Suddenly, my neighbor said to me, in good French:

"Do you know German, Monsieur?"

"Not at all, Monsieur."

"I am sorry for that. Since chance has thrown us side by side, I could have lent you, I could have shown you, an inestimable thing—this book which I hold in my hand."

"What is, pray?"

"It is a copy of my master, Schopenhauer, annotated with his own hand. All the margins, as you may see, are covered with his handwriting."

I took the book from him reverently, and I gazed at those forms incomprehensible to me, but which revealed the immortal thoughts of the greatest shatterer of dreams who had ever dwelt on earth.

And Musset's verses arose in my memory:

"Hast thou found out, Voltaire, that it is bliss to die,

Or does thy hideous smile over thy bleached bones fly?"

And involuntarily I compared the childish sarcasm, the religious sarcasm, of Voltaire with the irresistible irony of the German philosopher whose influence is henceforth ineffaceable.

Let us protest and let us be angry, let us be indignant or let us be enthusiastic. Schopenhauer has marked humanity with the seal of his disdain and of his disenchantment. A disabused pleasure-seeker, he overthrew beliefs, hopes, poetic ideals, and chimeras, destroyed the aspirations, ravaged the confidence of souls, killed love, dragged down the chivalrous worship of women, crushed the illusions of hearts, and accomplished the most gigantic task ever attempted by scepticism. He passed over everything with his mocking spirit, and left everything empty. And even to-day those who execrate him seem to carry portions of his thought, in spite of themselves, in their own souls.

"So, then, you were intimately acquainted with Schopenhauer?" I said to the German.

He smiled sadly.

"Up to the time of his death, Monsieur."

And he spoke to me about the philosopher and told me about the almost supernatural impression which this strange being made on all who came near him.

He gave me an account of the interview of the old iconoclast with a French politician, a *doctrinaire* Republican, who wanted to get a glimpse of this man, and found him in a noisy tavern, seated in the midst of his disciples, dry, wrinkled, laughing with an unforgettable laugh, eating and tearing ideas and beliefs with a single word, as a dog tears with one bite of his teeth the tissues with which he plays.

He repeated for me the comment of this Frenchman as he went away, scared and terrified: "I thought that

I had spent an hour with the devil."

Then he added:

"He had, indeed, Monsieur, a frightful smile, which terrified us even after his death. I can tell you an anecdote about it not generally known, if it has any interest for you."

And he began, in a tired voice, interrupted by frequent fits of coughing:

"Schopenhauer had just died, and it was arranged that we should watch, in turn, two by two, till morning.

"He was lying in a large apartment, very simple, vast, and gloomy. Two wax-candles were burning on the bedside stand.

"It was midnight when I took up my task of watching along with one of our comrades. The two friends whom we replaced had left the apartment, and we came and sat down at the foot of the bed.

"The face was not changed. It was laughing. That pucker which we knew so well lingered still around the corners of the lips, and it seemed to us that he was about to open his eyes, to move, and to speak. His thought, or rather his thoughts, enveloped us. We felt ourselves more than ever in the atmosphere of his genius, absorbed, possessed by him. His domination seemed to us even more sovereign now that he was dead. A sense of mystery was blended with the power of this incomparable spirit.

"The bodies of these men disappear, but they remain themselves; and in the night which follows the stoppage of their heart's beating, I assure you, Monsieur, they are terrifying.

"And in hushed tones we talked about him, recalling to mind certain sayings,

certain formulas of his, those startling maxims which are like jets of flame flung, by means of some words, into the darkness of the Unknown Life.

“‘It seems to me that he is going to speak,’ said my comrade. And we stared with uneasiness bordering on fear at the motionless face with its eternal laugh. Gradually, we began to feel ill at ease, oppressed, on the point of fainting. I faltered:

“‘I don’t know what is the matter with me, but, I assure you I am not well.’

“And at that moment we noticed that there was an unpleasant odor from the corpse.

“Then, my comrade suggested that we should go into the adjoining room, and leave the door open; and I assented to this proposal.

“I took one of the wax-candles which burned on the bedside stand, and I left the second behind. Then we went and sat down at the other end of the adjoining apartment, so as to be able to see from where we were the bed and the corpse clearly revealed by the light.

“But he still held possession of us. One would have said that his immaterial essence, liberated, free, all-powerful, and dominating, was flitting around us. And sometimes, too, the dreadful smell of the decomposing body came toward us and penetrated us, sickening and indefinable.

“Suddenly a shiver passed through our bones: a sound, a slight sound, came from the death-chamber. Immediately we fixed our glances on him, and we saw, yes, Monsieur, we saw distinctly, both of us, something white flying over

the bed, falling on the carpet, and vanishing under the armchair.

“We were on our feet before we had time to think of anything, distracted by stupefying terror, ready to run away. Then we stared at each other. We were horribly pale. Our hearts throbbed so fiercely that our clothes swelled over our chests. I was the first to speak.

“‘You saw?’

“‘Yes, I saw.’

“‘Can it be that he is not dead?’

“‘Why not, when the body is putrefying?’

“‘What are we to do?’

“My companion said in a hesitating tone:

“‘We must go and look.’

“I took our wax-candle and I entered first, searching with my eye through all the large apartment with its dark corners. There was not the least movement now, and I approached the bed. But I stood transfixed with stupor and fright: Schopenhauer was no longer laughing! He was grinning in a horrible fashion, with his lips pressed together and deep hollows in his cheeks. I stammered out:

“‘He is not dead!’

“But the terrible odor rose up to my nose and stifled me. And I no longer moved, but kept staring fixedly at him, scared as if in the presence of an apparition. Then my companion, having seized the other wax-candle, bent forward. Then, he touched my arm without uttering a word. I followed his glance, and I saw on the floor, under the armchair by the side of the bed, all

white on the dark carpet, open as if to bite, Schopenhauer's set of artificial teeth.

"The work of decomposition, loosening the jaws, had made it jump out of the mouth.

"I was really frightened that day, Monsieur."

And as the sun was sinking toward the glittering sea, the consumptive German rose from his seat, gave me a parting bow, and retired into the hotel.

A Queer Night in Paris

MAÎTRE SAVAL, notary at Vernon, was passionately fond of music. Still young, though already bald, always carefully shaved, a little corpulent, as was fitting, wearing a gold *pince-nez* instead of old-fashioned spectacles, active, gallant, and joyous, he passed in Vernon for an artist. He thrummed on the piano and played on the violin, and gave musical evenings where interpretations were given of new operas.

He had even what is called a bit of a voice; nothing but a bit, a very little bit of a voice; but he managed it with so much taste that cries of "Bravo!" "Exquisite!" "Surprising!" "Adorable!" issued from every throat as soon as he had murmured the last note.

He was a subscriber to a music publisher in Paris, who sent all new pieces to him. From time to time to the high society of the town he sent little notes something in this style:

"Your are invited to be present on Monday evening at the house of M. Saval, notary, Vernon, at the first production of 'Sais.' "

A few officers, gifted with good voices formed the chorus. Two or three of the vinedressers' families also sang. The notary filled the part of

leader of the orchestra with so much skill that the band-master of the 190th regiment of the line said one day, at the Café de l'Europe:

"Oh! M. Saval is a master. It is a great pity that he did not adopt the career of an artist."

When his name was mentioned in a drawing-room, there was always found somebody to declare: "He is not an amateur; he is an artist, a genuine artist." And two or three persons would repeat, in a tone of profound conviction: "Oh! yes, a genuine artist," laying particular stress on the word "genuine."

Every time that a new work was interpreted at a big Parisian theater, M. Saval paid a visit to the capital. Last year, according to his custom, he went to hear "Henry VIII." He then took the express which arrives in Paris at 4:30 P. M., intending to return by the 12:35 A. M. train so as not to have to sleep at a hotel. He had put on evening dress, a black coat and white tie, which he concealed under his overcoat with the collar turned up.

As soon as he had planted his foot on the Rue d'Amsterdam, he felt in quite a jovial mood, and said to himself:

"Decidedly the air of Paris does not

resemble any other air. It has in it something indescribably stimulating, exciting, intoxicating, which fills you with a strange longing to gambol and to do many other things. As soon as I arrive here, it seems to me, all of a sudden, that I have taken a bottle of champagne. What a life one can lead in this city in the midst of artists! Happy are the elect, the great men who enjoy renown in such a city! What an existence is theirs!"

And he made plans; he would have liked to know some of those celebrated men, to talk about them in Vernon, and to spend an evening with them from time to time in Paris.

But suddenly an idea struck him. He had heard allusions to little *cafés* in the outer boulevards at which well-known painters, men of letters, and even musicians gathered, and he proceeded to go toward Montmartre at a slow pace.

He had two hours before him. He wanted to have a look round. He passed in front of taverns frequented by belated Bohemians, gazing at the different faces, seeking to discover the artists. Finally, he came to the sign of "The Dead Rat," and, allured by the name, he entered.

Five or six women with their elbows resting on the marble tables, were talking in low tones about their love affairs, the quarrels of Lucie with Hortense, and the scoundrelism of Octave. They were no longer young, but were fat or thin, tired out, used up. You could see that they were almost bald; and they drank bocks like men.

M. Saval sat down at some distance

from them, and waited, for the hour for taking absinthe was at hand.

A tall young man soon came in and took a seat beside him. The landlady called him "M. Romantin." The notary quivered. Was this the Romantin who had taken a medal at the last Salon?

The young man made a sign to the waiter:

"You will bring up my dinner at once, and then carry to my new studio, 15, Boulevard de Clichy, thirty bottles of beer and the ham I ordered this morning. We are going to have a housewarming."

M. Saval immediately ordered dinner. Then he took off his overcoat, so that his dress coat and his white tie could be seen. His neighbor did not seem to notice him. M. Saval glanced sideways at him, burning with the desire to speak to him.

Two young men entered, in red velvet, and peaked beards in the fashion of Henry III. They sat down opposite Romantin.

The first of the pair said:

"It is for this evening?"

Romantin pressed his hand.

"I believe you, old chap, and everyone will be there. I have Bonnat, Guillemet, Gervex, Béraud, Hébert, Duez, Clairin, and Jean-Paul Laurens. It will be a glorious blowout! And women, too! Wait till you see! Every actress without exception—of course I mean, you know all those who have nothing to do this evening."

The landlord of the establishment came across.

"Do you often have this housewarming?"

The painter replied:

"Certainly—every three months, each quarter."

M. Saval could not restrain himself any longer, and in a hesitating voice said:

"I beg your pardon for intruding on you, Monsieur, but I heard your name pronounced, and I would be very glad to know if you really are M. Romantin whose work in the last Salon I have so much admired."

The painter answered:

"I am the person, Monsieur."

The notary then paid the artist a very well-turned compliment, showing that he was a man of culture. The painter, gratified, thanked him politely in reply. Then they chatted. Romantin returned to the subject of his house-warming going into details as to the magnificence of the forthcoming entertainment.

M. Saval questioned him as to all the men he was going to receive, adding:

"It would be an extraordinary piece of good fortune for a stranger, to meet at one time, so many celebrities assembled in the studio of an artist of your rank."

Romantin, overcome, answered: "If it would be agreeable to you, come."

M. Saval accepted the invitation with enthusiasm, reflecting:

"I'll always have time enough to see 'Henry VIII.'"

Both of them had finished their meal. The notary insisted on paying the two bills, wishing to repay his neighbor's civilities. He also paid for the drinks of the young fellows in red velvet; then he left the establishment with the painter.

They stopped in front of a very long

house, by no means high, the first story of which had the appearance of an interminable conservatory. Six studios stood in a row with their fronts facing the boulevards.

Romantin was the first to enter. Ascending the stairs, he opened a door, and lighted a match and then a candle.

They found themselves in an immense apartment, the furniture of which consisted of three chairs, two easels, and a few sketches lying on the floor along the walls. M. Saval remained standing at the door in a stupefied state of mind.

The painter remarked:

"Here you are! We've got to the spot; but everything has yet to be done."

Then, examining the high, bare apartment, whose ceiling was veiled in shadows, he said:

"We might make a great deal out of this studio."

He walked around it, surveying it with the utmost attention, then went on:

"I have a mistress who might easily give us a helping hand. Women are incomparable for hanging drapery. But I sent her to the country to-day in order to get her off my hands this evening. It is not that she bores me, but she is too much lacking in the ways of good society. It would be embarrassing to my guests."

He reflected for a few seconds, and then added:

"She is a good girl, but not easy to deal with. If she knew that I was holding a reception, she would tear out my eyes."

M. Saval had not even moved; he did not understand.

The artist came over to him.

"Since I have invited you, you are going to give me some help."

The notary said emphatically:

"Make any use of me you please. I am at your disposal.

Romantin took off his jacket.

"Well, citizen, to work! We are first going to clean up."

He went to the back of the easel, on which there was a canvas representing a cat, and seized a very worn-out broom.

"I say! Just brush up while I look after the lighting."

M. Saval took the broom, inspected it, and then began to sweep the floor very awkwardly, raising a whirlwind of dust.

Romantin, disgusted, stopped him: "Deuce take it! you don't know how to sweep the floor! Look at me!"

And he began to roll before him a heap of grayish sweepings, as if he had done nothing else all his life. Then he gave back the broom to the notary, who imitated him.

In five minutes, such a cloud of dust filled the studio that Romantin asked:

"Where are you? I can't see you any longer."

M. Saval, who was coughing, came nearer to him. The painter said to him:

"How are you going to manage to get up a chandelier?"

The other stunned, asked:

"What chandelier?"

"Why, a chandelier to light—a chandelier with wax-candles."

The notary did not understand.

He answered: "I don't know."

The painter began to jump about, cracking his fingers.

"Well, Monseigneur, I have found out a way."

Then he went more calmly:

"Have you got five francs about you?"

M. Saval replied:

"Why, yes."

The artist said:

"Well! you'll go and buy for me five francs' worth of wax-candles while I go and see the cooper."

And he pushed the notary in his evening coat into the street. At the end of five minutes, they had returned, one of them with the wax-candles, and the other with the hoop of a cask. Then Romantin plunged his hand into a cupboard, and drew forth twenty empty bottles, which he fixed in the form of a crown around the hoop. He then came down, and went to borrow a ladder from the doorkeeper, after having explained that he obtained the favors of the old woman by painting the portrait of her cat exhibited on the easel.

When he mounted the ladder, he said to M. Saval:

"Are you active?"

The other, without understanding answered:

"Why, yes."

"Well, you just climb up there, and fasten this chandelier for me to the ring of the ceiling. Then you must put a wax-candle in each bottle, and light it. I tell you I have a genius for lighting up. But off with your coat, damn it! you are just like a Jeames."

The door was opened violently. A woman appeared, with her eyes flashing, and remained standing on the thresh-

hold. Romantin gazed at her with a look of terror. She waited some seconds, crossed her arms over her breast, and then in a shill, vibrating, exasperated voice said:

"Ha! you villain, is this the way you leave me?"

Romantin made no reply. She went on:

"Ha! you scoundrel! You are again doing the swell, while you pack me off to the country. You'll soon see the way I'll settle your jollification. Yes, I'm going to receive your friends."

She grew warmer:

"I'm going to slap their faces with the bottles and the wax-candles."

Romantin uttered one soft word:

"Mathilde."

But she did not pay any attention to him; she went on:

"Wait a little, my fine fellow! wait a little!"

Romantin went over to her, and tried to take her by the hands:

"Mathilde."

But she was now fairly under way; and on she went, emptying the vials of her wrath with strong words and reproaches. They flowed out of her mouth, like a stream sweeping a heap of filth along with it. The words hurled out seemed struggling for exit. She stuttered, stammered, yelled, suddenly recovering her voice to cast forth an insult or a curse.

He seized her hands without her having even noticed it. She did not seem to see anything, so much occupied was she in holding forth and relieving her heart. And suddenly she began to weep. The tears flowed from her eyes without making her stem the tide of her

complaints. But her words had taken a howling, shrieking tone; they were a continuous cry interrupted by sobbings. She commenced afresh twice or three times, till she stopped as if something were choking her, and at last she ceased with a regular flood of tears.

Then he clasped her in his arms and kissed her hair, himself affected.

"Mathilde, my little Mathilde, listen. You must be reasonable. You know, if I give a supper party to my friends, it is to thank these gentlemen for the medal I got at the Salon. I cannot receive women. You ought to understand that. It is not the same with artists as with other people."

She stammered in the midst of her tears:

"Why didn't you tell me this?"

He replied:

"It was in order not to annoy you, not to give you pain. Listen, I'm going to see you home. You will be very sensible, very nice; you will remain quietly waiting for me in bed, and I'll come back as soon as it's over."

She murmured:

"Yes, but you will not begin over again?"

"No, I swear to you!"

He turned toward M. Saval, who had at last hooked on the chandelier:

"My dear friend, I am coming back in five minutes. If anyone arrives in my absence, do the honors for me, will you not?"

And he carried off Mathilde, who kept drying her eyes with her handkerchief as she went along.

Left to himself, M. Saval succeeded in putting everything around him in

order. Then he lighted the wax-candles and waited.

He waited for a quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour. Romantin did not return. Then, suddenly, there was a dreadful noise on the stairs, a song shouted out in chorus by twenty mouths and a regular march like that of a Prussian regiment. The whole house was shaken by the steady tramp of feet. The door flew open, and a motly throng appeared—men and women in a row, holding one another arm in arm, in pairs, and kicking their heels on the floor, in proper time—advancing into the studio like a snake uncoiling itself. They howled:

“Come, let us all be merry,
Pretty maids and soldiers gay!”

M. Saval, thunderstruck, remained standing in evening dress under the chandelier. The procession of revellers caught sight of him, and uttered a shout:

“À Jeames! À Jeames!”

And they began whirling round him, surrounding him with a circle of vociferation. Then they took each other by the hand and went dancing about madly.

He attempted to explain:

“Messieurs — Messieurs — Mesdames —”

But they did not listen to him. They whirled about, they jumped, they brawled.

At last the dancing ceased. M. Saval uttered the word:

“Messieurs—”

A tall young fellow, fair-haired and bearded to the nose, interrupted him:

“What’s your name, my friend?”

The notary, quite scared, said:

“I am M. Saval.”

A voice exclaimed:

“You mean Baptiste.”

A woman said:

“Let the poor waiter alone! You’ll end by making him get angry. He’s paid to attend on us, and not to be laughed at by us.”

Then, M. Saval noticed that each guest had brought his own provisions. One held a bottle of wine, another a pie. This one had a loaf of bread, that one a ham.

The tall, fair, young fellow placed in his hands an enormous sausage, and gave him orders:

“Go and settle up the sideboard in the corner over there. You are to put the bottles at the left and the provisions at the right.”

Saval, getting quite distracted, exclaimed:

“But, Messieurs, I am a notary!”

There was a moment’s silence and then a wild outburst of laughter. One suspicious gentleman asked:

“How are you here?”

He explained, telling about his project of going to the opera, his departure from Vernon, his arrival in Paris, and the way in which he had spent the evening.

They sat around him to listen to him; they greeted him with words of applause, and called him Scheherazade.

Romantin did not come back. Other guests arrived. M. Saval was presented to them so that he might begin his story over again. He declined; they forced him to relate it. They fixed him on one of three chairs between two women who kept constantly filling his glass. He drank; he laughed; he talked;

he sang, too. He tried to waltz with his chair, and fell on the floor.

From that moment, he forgot everything. It seemed to him, however, that they undressed him, put him to bed, and that his stomach got sick.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight, and he lay stretched with his feet against a cupboard, in a strange bed.

An old woman with a broom in her hand was glaring angrily at him. At last, she said:

"Clear out, you blackguard! Clear out! What right has anyone to get drunk like this?"

He sat up in his bed, feeling very ill at ease. He asked:

"Where am I?"

"Where are you, you dirty scamp? You are drunk. Take your rotten carcass out of here as quick as you can,—and lose no time about it!"

He wanted to get up. He found that

he was naked in the bed. His clothes had disappeared. He blurted out:

"Madame, I—"

Then he remembered. What was he to do? He asked:

"Did Monsieur Romantin come back?"

The doorkeeper shouted:

"Will you take your dirty carcass out of this so that he at any rate may not catch you here?"

M. Saval said, in a state of confusion:

"I haven't got my clothes; they have been taken away from me."

He had to wait, to explain his situation, give notice to his friends, and borrow some money to buy clothes. He did not leave Paris till evening.

And, when people talk about music to him in his beautiful drawing-room in Vernon, he declares with an air of authority that painting is a very inferior art.

A Duel

THE war was over. The Germans occupied France. The country was panting like a wrestler lying under the knee of his successful opponent.

The first trains from Paris, after the city's long agony of famine and despair, were making their way to the new frontiers, slowly passing through the country districts and the villages. The passengers gazed through the windows at the ravaged fields and burned hamlets. Prussian soldiers, in their black hamlets with brass spikes, were smoking their

pipes on horseback or sitting on chairs in front of the houses which were still left standing. Others were working or talking just as if they were members of the families. As you passed through the different towns, you saw entire regiments drilling in the squares, and, in spite of the rumble of the carriage-wheels, you could, every moment, hear the hoarse words of command.

M. Dubuis, who during the entire siege had served as one of the National Guard in Paris, was going to join his

wife and daughter, whom he had prudently sent away to Switzerland before the invasion.

Famine and hardship had not diminished the big paunch so characteristic of the rich, peace-loving merchant. He had gone through the terrible events of the past year with sorrowful resignation and bitter complaints at the savagery of men. Now that he was journeying to the frontier at the close of the war, he saw the Prussians for the first time, although he had done duty at the ramparts, and staunchly mounted guard on cold nights.

He stared with mingled fear and anger at those bearded armed men installed all over French soil as if in their own homes, and he felt in his soul a kind of fever of impotent patriotism even while he yielded to that other instinct of discretion and self-preservation which never leaves us. In the same compartment, two Englishmen, who had come to the country as sight-seers, were gazing around with looks of stolid curiosity. They were both stout also, and kept chattering in their own language, sometimes referring to their guidebook, and reading in loud tones the names of the places indicated.

Suddenly, the train stopped at a little village station, and a Prussian officer jumped up with a great clatter of his saber on the double footboard of the railway-carriage. He was tall, wore a tight-fitting uniform, and his face had a very shaggy aspect. His red hair seemed to be on fire and his long mustache and beard, of a paler color, was stuck out on both sides of his face, which it seemed to cut in two.

The Englishmen at once began star-

ing at him with smiles of newly-awakened interest, while M. Dubuis made a show of reading a newspaper. He sat crouched in a corner, like a thief in the presence of a gendarme.

The train started again. The Englishmen went on chatting, and looking out for the exact scene of different battles; and, all of a sudden, as one of them stretched out his arm toward the horizon to indicate a village, the Prussian officer remarked in French, extending his long legs and lolling backward:

"We killed a dozen Frenchmen in that village, and took more than a hundred prisoners."

The Englishmen, quite interested, immediately asked:

"Ha! and what is the name of this village?"

The Prussian replied:

"Pharsbourg."

He added: "We caught these French blackguards by the ears."

And he glanced toward M. Dubuis, laughing into his mustache in an insulting fashion.

The train rolled on, always passing through hamlets occupied by the victorious army. German soldiers could be seen along the roads, on the edges of fields, standing in front of gates, or chatting outside *cafés*. They covered the soil like African locusts.

The officer said, with a wave of his hand:

"If I were in command, I'd take Paris, burn everything, and kill everybody. No more France!"

The Englishmen, through politeness, replied simply:

"Ah! yes."

He went on:

"In twenty years, all Europe, all of it, will belong to us. Prussia is more than a match for all of them."

The Englishmen, getting uneasy, said nothing in answer to this. Their faces, which had become impassive, seemed made of wax behind their long whiskers. Then the Prussian officer began to laugh. And then, lolling back, he began to sneer. He sneered at the downfall of France, insulted the prostrate enemy; he sneered at Austria which had been recently conquered; he sneered at the furious but fruitless defense of the departments; he sneered at the Garde Mobile and at the useless artillery. He announced that Bismarck was going to build a city of iron with the captured cannons. And suddenly he pushed his boots against the thigh of M. Dubuis, who turned his eyes away, reddening to the roots of his hair.

The Englishmen seemed to have assumed an air of complete indifference, as if they had found themselves all at once shut up in their own island, far from the din of the world.

The officer took out his pipe, and looking fixedly at the Frenchman, said:

"You haven't got any tobacco—have you?"

M. Dubuis replied:

"No, Monsieur."

The German said:

"You might go and buy some for me when the train stops next."

And he began laughing afresh, as he added:

"I'll let you have the price of a drink."

The train whistled and slackened its pace. They had reached a station which

had been burned down and here there was a regular stop.

The German opened the carriage door, and, catching M. Dubuis by the arm, said:

"Go, and do what I told you—quick, quick!"

A Prussian detachment occupied the station. Other soldiers were looking on from behind wooden gratings. The engine was already getting up steam in order to start off again. Then M. Dubuis hurriedly jumped on the platform, and, in spite of the warnings of the station-master, dashed into the adjoining compartment.

* * * * *

He was alone! He tore open his waistcoat, so rapidly did his heart beat, and, panting for breath, he wiped the perspiration off his forehead.

The train drew up at another station. And suddenly the officer appeared at the carriage door, and jumped in, followed close behind by the two Englishmen, who were impelled by curiosity. The German sat facing the Frenchman, and, laughing still, said:

"You did not want to do what I asked you."

M. Dubuis replied: "No, Monsieur."

The train had just left the station, when the officer said:

"I'll cut off your mustache to fill my pipe with." And he put out his hand toward the Frenchman's face.

The Englishmen kept staring in the same impassive fashion with fixed glances. Already the German had caught hold of the mustache and was tugging at it, when M. Dubuis, with a back-stroke of his hand threw back the officer's arm, and seizing him by the

collar, flung him down on the seat. Then, excited to a pitch of fury, with his temples swollen and his eyes glaring he kept throttling the officer with one hand while with the other clenched, he began to strike him violent blows in the face. The Prussian struggled, tried to draw his saber, and to get a grip, while lying back, of his adversary. But M. Dubuis crushed him with the enormous weight of his stomach, and kept hitting him without taking breath or knowing where his blows fell. Blood flowed down the face of the German, who, choking and with a rattling in his throat, spat forth his broken teeth, and vainly strove to shake off this infuriated man who was killing him.

The Englishmen had got on their feet and came closer to see better. They remained standing, full of mirth and curiosity, ready to bet for or against each of the combatants.

And suddenly M. Dubuis, exhausted by his violent efforts, went and resumed his seat without uttering a word.

The Prussian did not attack him, for the savage assault had scared and terrified the officer. When he was able to breathe freely, he said:

"Unless you give me satisfaction with pistols, I will kill you."

M. Dubuis replied:

"Whenever you like. I'm quite ready."

The German said:

"Here is the town of Strasbourg. I'll get two officers to be my seconds, and there will be time before the train leaves the station."

M. Dubuis, who was puffing as much as the engine, said to the Englishmen:

"Will you be my seconds?" They both answered together:

"Oh! yes."

And the train stopped.

In a minute, the Prussian had found two comrades who carried pistols, and they made their way toward the ramparts.

The Englishmen were continually looking at their watches, shuffling their feet, and hurrying on with the preparations, uneasy lest they should be too late for the train.

M. Dubuis had never fired a pistol in his life. They made him stand twenty paces away from his enemy. He was asked:

"Are you ready?"

While he was answering "Yes, Monsieur," he noticed that one of the Englishmen had opened his umbrella in order to keep off the rays of the sun.

A voice gave the word of command. "Fire!"

M. Dubuis fired at random without minding what he was doing, and he was amazed to see the Prussian staggering in front of him, lifting up his arms, and immediately afterward, falling straight on his face. He had killed the officer.

One of the Englishmen ejaculated "Ah!" quivering with delight, satisfied curiosity, and joyous impatience. The other, who still kept his watch in his hand, hurried him in double-quick time toward the station, his fellow-countryman counting their steps, with his arms pressed close to his sides: "One! two! one! two!"

And all three marching abreast they rapidly made their way to the station like three grotesque figures in a comic newspaper.

The train was on the point of starting. They sprang into their carriage.

Then the Englishmen, taking off their traveling-caps, waved them three times over their heads, exclaiming:

"Hip! hip! hip! hurrah!"

Then gravely, one after the other, they stretched out their right hands to M. Dubuis, and then went back and sat in their own corner.

The Umbrella

MME. OREILLE was a very economical woman; she thoroughly knew the value of a half-penny, and possessed a whole storehouse of strict principles with regard to the multiplication of money, so that her cook found the greatest difficulty in making what the servants call their "market-penny," while her husband was hardly allowed any pocket-money at all. They were, however, very comfortably off, and had no children. It really pained Mme. Oreille to see any money spent; it was like tearing at her heartstrings when she had to take any of those nice crownpieces out of her pocket; and whenever she had to spend anything, no matter how necessary it was, she slept badly the next night.

Oreille was continually saying to his wife:

"You really might be more liberal, as we have no children and never spend our income."

"You don't know what may happen," she used to reply. "It is better to have too much than too little."

She was a little woman of about forty, very active, rather hasty, wrinkled, very neat and tidy, and with a very short temper. Her husband very often used to complain of all the privations she made him endure; some of them were

particularly painful to him, as they touched his vanity.

He was one of the upper clerks in the War Office, and only stayed there in obedience to his wife's wish, so as to increase their income, which they did not nearly spend.

For two years he had always come to the office with the same old patched umbrella, to the great amusement of his fellow-clerks. At last he got tired of their jokes, and insisted upon his wife buying him a new one. She bought one for eight francs and a-half, one of those cheap things which large houses sell as an advertisement. When the others in the office saw the article, which was being sold in Paris by the thousand, they began their jokes again, and Oreille had a dreadful time of it with them. They even made a song about it, which he heard from morning till night all over the immense building.

Oreille was very angry, and peremptorily told his wife to get him a new one, a good silk one, for twenty francs, and to bring him the bill, so that he might see that it was all right.

She bought him one for eighteen francs, and said, getting red with anger as she gave it to her husband:

"This will last you for five years at least."

Oreille felt quite triumphant, and obtained a small ovation at the office with his new acquisition. When he went home in the evening, his wife said to him, looking at the umbrella uneasily:

"You should not leave it fastened up with the elastic; it will very likely cut the silk. You must take care of it, for I shall not buy you a new one in a hurry."

She took it, unfastened it, and then remained dumfounded with astonishment and rage. In the middle of the silk there was a hole as big as a six-penny-piece, as if made with the end of a cigar.

"What is that?" she screamed.

Her husband replied quietly, without looking at it:

"What is it? What do you mean?"

She was choking with rage and could hardly get out a word.

"You—you—have burned—your umbrella! Why—you must be—mad! Do you wish to ruin us outright?"

He turned round hastily, as if frightened.

"What are you talking about?"

"I say that you have burned your umbrella. Just look here—"

And rushing at him, as if she were going to beat him, she violently thrust the little circular burned hole under his nose.

He was so utterly struck dumb at the sight of it that he could only stammer out:

"What—what is it? How should I know? I have done nothing, I will swear. I don't know what is the matter with the umbrella."

"You have been playing tricks with it at the office; you have been playing

the fool and opening it; to show it off!" she screamed.

"I only opened it once, to let them see what a nice one it was, that is all, I declare."

But she shook with rage, and got up one of those conjugal scenes which make a peaceable man dread the domestic hearth more than a battlefield where bullets are raining.

She mended it with a piece of silk cut out of the old umbrella, which was of a different color, and the next day Oreille went off very humbly with the mended article in his hand. He put it into a cupboard, and thought no more of it than of some unpleasant recollection.

But he had scarcely got home that evening when his wife took the umbrella from him, opened it, and nearly had a fit when she saw what had befallen it, for the disaster was now irreparable. It was covered with small holes which, evidently, proceeded from burns, just as if some one had emptied the ashes from a lighted pipe on to it. It was done for utterly, irreparably.

She looked at it without a word, in too great a passion to be able to say anything. He also, when he saw the damage, remained almost dumb, in a state of frightened consternation.

They looked at each other; then he looked on to the floor. The next moment she threw the useless article at his head, screaming out in a transport of the most violent rage, for she had now recovered her voice:

"Oh! you brute! you brute! You did it on purpose, but I will pay you out for it. You shall not have another."

And then the scene began again. After the storm had raged for an hour.

he, at last, was enabled to explain himself. He declared that he could not understand it at all, and that it could only proceed from malice or from vengeance.

A ring at the bell saved him; it was a friend whom they were expecting to dinner.

Mme. Oreille submitted the case to him. As for buying a new umbrella, that was out of the question; her husband should not have another. The friend very sensibly said that in that case his clothes would be spoiled, and they were certainly worth more than the umbrella. But the little woman, who was still in a rage, replied:

"Very well, then, when it rains he may have the kitchen umbrella, for I will not give him a new silk one."

Oreille utterly rebelled at such an idea.

"All right," he said; "then I shall resign my post. I am not going to the office with the kitchen umbrella."

The friend interposed:

"Have this one recovered; it will not cost much."

But Mme. Oreille, being in the temper that she was, said:

"It will cost at least eight francs to recover it. Eight and eighteen are twenty-six. Just fancy, twenty-six francs for an umbrella! It is utter madness!"

The friend, who was only a poor man of the middle classes, had an inspiration:

"Make your fire insurance pay for it. The companies pay for all articles that are burned, as long as the damage has been done in your own house."

On hearing this advice the little woman calmed down immediately, and

then, after a moment's reflection, she said to her husband:

"To-morrow, before going to your office, you will go to the Maternelle Insurance Company, show them the state your umbrella is in, and make them pay for the damage."

M. Oreille fairly jumped, he was so startled at the proposal.

"I would not do it for my life! It is eighteen francs lost, that is all. It will not ruin us."

The next morning he took a walking-stick when he went out, for luckily, it was a fine day.

Left at home alone, Mme. Oreille could not get over the loss of her eighteen francs by any means. She had put the umbrella on the dining-room table, and she looked at it without being able to come to any determination.

Every moment she thought of the insurance company, but she did not dare to encounter the quizzical looks of the gentlemen who might receive her, for she was very timid before people, and grew red at a mere nothing, feeling embarrassed when she had to speak to strangers.

But regret at the loss of the eighteen francs pained her as if she had been wounded. She tried not to think of it any more, and yet every moment the recollection of the loss struck her painfully. What was she to do, however? Time went on, and she could not decide; but suddenly, like all cowards, she made up her mind.

"I will go, and we will see what will happen."

But first of all she was obliged to prepare the umbrella so that the disaster might be complete, and the reason of it

quite evident. She took a match from the mantelpiece, and between the ribs she burned a hole as big as the palm of her hand. Then she rolled it up carefully, fastened it with the elastic band, put on her bonnet and shawl, and went quickly toward the Rue de Rivoli, where the insurance office was.

But the nearer she got the slower she walked. What was she going to say, and what reply would she get?

She looked at the numbers of the houses; there were still twenty-eight. That was all right, she had time to consider, and she walked slower and slower. Suddenly she saw a door on which was a large brass plate with "La Maternelle Insurance Office" engraved on it. Already! She waited for a moment, for she felt nervous and almost ashamed; then she went past, came back, went past again, and came back again.

At last she said to herself:

"I must go in, however, so I may as well do it now as later."

She could not help noticing, however, how her heart beat as she entered. She went into an enormous room with grated wicket openings all round, and a man behind each of them, and as a gentleman, carrying a number of papers, passed her, she stopped him and said, timidly:

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, but can you tell me where I must apply for payment for anything that has been accidentally burned?"

He replied in a sonorous voice:

"The first door on the left; that is the department you want."

This frightened her still more, and she felt inclined to run away, to make no claim, to sacrifice her eighteen francs. But the idea of that sum revived her

courage, and she went upstairs, out of breath, stopping at almost every other step.

She knocked at a door which she saw on the first landing, and a clear voice said, in answer:

"Come in!"

She obeyed mechanically, and found herself in a large room where three solemn gentlemen, each with a decoration in his buttonhole, were standing talking.

One of them asked her: "What do you want, Madame?"

She could hardly get out her words, but stammered: "I have come—I have come on account of an accident, something—"

He very politely pointed out a seat to her.

"If you will kindly sit down I will attend to you in a moment."

And, returning to the other two, he went on with the conversation.

"The company, gentlemen, does not consider that it is under any obligation to you for more than four hundred thousand francs, and we can pay no attention to your claim to the further sum of a hundred thousand, which you wish to make us pay. Besides that, the surveyor's valuation—"

One of the others interrupted him:

"That is quite enough, Monsieur; the law courts will decide between us, and we have nothing further to do than to take our leave." And they went out after mutual ceremonious bows.

Oh! if she could only have gone away with them, how gladly she would have done it; she would have run away and given up everything. But it was too

late, for the gentleman came back, and said, bowing:

"What can I do for you, Madame?"

She could scarcely speak, but at last she managed to say:

"I have come—for this."

The manager looked at the object which she held out to him in mute astonishment. With trembling fingers she tried to undo the elastic, and succeeded, after several attempts, and hastily opened the damaged remains of the umbrella.

"It looks to me to be in a very bad state of health," he said, compassionately.

"It cost me twenty francs," she said, with some hesitation.

He seemed astonished. "Really! As much as that?"

"Yes, it was a capital article, and I wanted you to see the state it is in."

"Very well, I see; very well. But I really do not understand what it can have to do with me."

She began to feel uncomfortable; perhaps this company did not pay for such small articles, and she said:

"But—it is burned."

He could not deny it.

"I see that very well," he replied.

She remained open-mouthed, not knowing what to say next; then suddenly forgetting that she had left out the main thing, she said hastily:

"I am Mme. Oreille; we are assured in La Maternelle, and I have come to claim the value of this damage. I only wanted you to have it recovered," she added quickly, fearing a positive refusal.

The manager was rather embarrassed, and said:

"But, really, Madame, we do not sell umbrellas; we cannot undertake such kinds of repairs."

The little woman felt her courage reviving; she was not going to give up without a struggle; she was not even afraid now, so she said:

"I only want you to pay me the cost of repairing it; I can quite well get it done myself."

The gentleman seemed rather confused.

"Really, Madame, it is such a very small matter! We are never asked to give compensation for such trivial losses. You must allow that we cannot make good pocket-handkerchiefs, gloves, brooms, slippers, all the small articles which are every day exposed to the chances of being burned."

She got red, and felt inclined to fly into a rage.

"But, Monsieur, last December one of our chimneys caught fire, and caused at least five hundred francs' damage. M. Oreille made no claim on the company, and so it is only just that it should pay for my umbrella now."

The manager, guessing that she was telling a lie, said, with a smile:

"You must acknowledge, Madame, that it is very surprising that M. Oreille should have asked no compensation for damages amounting to five hundred francs, and should now claim five or six francs for mending an umbrella."

She was not the least put out, and replied:

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, the five hundred francs affected M. Oreille's pocket, whereas this damage, amounting to eighteen francs, concerns Mme.

Oreille's pocket only, which is a totally different matter."

As he saw that he had no chance of getting rid of her, and that he would only be wasting his time, he said, resignedly:

"Will you kindly tell me how the damage was done?"

She felt that she had won the victory, and said:

"This is how it happened, Monsieur: In our hall there is a bronze stick- and umbrella-stand, and the other day, when I came in, I put my umbrella into it. I must tell you that just above there is a shelf for the candlesticks and matches. I put out my hand, took three or four matches, and struck one, but it missed fire, so I struck other, which ignited, but went out immediately, and a third did the same."

The manager interrupted her, to make a joke.

"I suppose they were Government matches, then?"

She did not understand him, and went on:

"Very likely. At any rate, the fourth caught fire, and I lit my candle, and went into my room to go to bed; but in a quarter-of-an-hour I fancied that I smelled something burning, and I have always been terribly afraid of fire. If ever we have an accident it will not be my fault, I assure you. I am terribly nervous since our chimney was on fire, as I told you; so I got up, and hunted about everywhere, sniffing like a dog after game, and at last I noticed that my umbrella was burning. Most likely a match had fallen between the folds

and burned it. You can see how it has damaged it."

The manager had taken his cue, and asked her:

"What do you estimate the damage at?"

She did not know what to say, as she was not certain what amount to put on it, but at last she replied:

"Perhaps you had better get it done yourself. I will leave it to you."

He, however, naturally refused.

"No, Madame, I cannot do that. Tell me the amount of your claim, that is all I want to know."

"Well!—I think that— Look here, Monsieur, I do not want to make any money out of you, so I will tell you what we will do. I will take my umbrella to the maker, who will recover it in good, durable silk, and I will bring the bill to you. Will that suit you, Monsieur?"

"Perfectly, Madame; we will settle it on that basis. Here is a note for the cashier, who will repay you whatever it costs you."

He gave Mme. Oreille a slip of paper. She took it, got up, and went out, thanking him, for she was in a hurry to escape lest he should change his mind.

She went briskly through the streets, looking out for a really good umbrella-maker, and when she found a shop which appeared to be a first-class one, she went in, and said, confidently:

"I want this umbrella recovered in silk, good silk. Use the very best and strongest you have; I don't mind what it costs."

The Question of Latin

THIS question of Latin, with which we were so much bothered some time since, recalls to my mind a story—a story of my youth.

I was finishing my studies with a teacher, in a big central town, at the Institution Robineau, celebrated through the entire province owing to the special attention paid there to Latin studies.

For the past ten years, the Institution Robineau beat at every competitive examination the Imperial "lycée" of the town, and all the colleges of the Subprefecture; and these constant successes were due, they said, to an usher, a simple usher, M. Piquedent, or rather Père Piquedent.

He was one of those middle-aged men, quite gray, whose real age it is impossible to know, and whose history we can guess at first glance. Having entered as an usher at twenty into the first institution that presented itself so that he could proceed to take out his degree of Doctor of Laws, he found himself so much enmeshed in this sinister life that he remained as usher all his life. But his love for Latin did not leave him, but harassed him like an unhealthy passion. He continued to read the poets, the prose-writers, the historians, to interpret them, to study their meaning, to comment on them with a perseverance bordering on madness.

One day, the idea came into his head to force all the students of his class to answer him in Latin only; and he persisted in this resolution until at last they were capable of sustaining an entire conversation with him just as they would in their mother-tongue. He listened to them, as a leader of an orches-

tra listens to his musicians rehearsing, and, striking his desk every moment with his ruler, he exclaimed:

"Monsieur Lefrère, Monsieur Lefrère, you are committing a solecism! You are not recalling the rule to mind.

"Monsieur Plantel, your turn of phrase is altogether French and in no way Latin. You must understand the genius of a language. Look here, listen to me."

Now it came to pass that the pupils of the Institution Robineau carried off, at the end of the year, all the prizes for composition, translation, and Latin conversation.

Next year, the principal, a little man, as cunning as an ape, and with the same grinning and grotesque physique, got printed on his programmes, on his advertisements, and painted on the door of his institution:

"Latin Studies a Specialty. Five first prizes carried off in the five classes of the lycée.

"Two prizes of honor at the general Competitive Examinations with all the lycées and colleges of France."

For ten years the Institution Robineau triumphed in the same fashion. Now, my father, allured by these successes, sent my as a day-pupil to Robineau's—or, as we called it, Robinetto or Robinettino—and made me take special private lessons from Père Piquedent at the rate of five francs per hour, out of which the usher got two francs and the principal three francs. I was at the time in my eighteenth year, and was in the philosophy class.

These private lessons were given in a little room looking out on the street.

It so happened that Père Piquedent, instead of talking Latin to me, as he did when teaching publicly in the Institution, kept telling about his troubles in French. Without relations, without friends, the poor man conceived an attachment for me, and poured out into my heart his own misery.

He had never for the last ten or fifteen years chatted confidentially with anyone.

"I am like an oak in a desert," he said—"sicut quercus in solitudine."

The other ushers disgusted him. He knew nobody in the town since he had no liberty for the purpose of making acquaintances.

"Not even the nights, my friend, and that is the hardest thing on me. The dream of my life is to have a room of my own with furniture, my own books, little things that belonged to myself and which others could not touch. And I have nothing of my own, nothing except my shirt and my frock-coat, nothing, not even my mattress and my pillow! I have not four walls to shut myself up in, except when I come to give a lesson in this room. Do you see what this means—a man forced to spend his life without ever having the right, without ever finding the time to shut himself up all alone, no matter where, to think, to reflect, to work, to dream? Ah! my dear boy, a key, the key of a door which one can open—this is happiness, mark you, the only happiness!

"Here, all day long, the study with all those dirty brats jumping about in it, and during the night the dormitory with the same dirty brats snoring. And I have to sleep in the public bed at the end of two rows of beds occupied by

these brats whom I must look after. I can never be alone, never! If I go out, I find the street full of people, and, when I am tired of walking, I go into some *café* crowded with smokers and billiard players. I tell you that it is a regular prison."

I asked him:

"Why did you not take up some other line, Monsieur Piquedent?"

He exclaimed:

"What, my little friend? I am not a bootmaker or a joiner or a hatter or a baker or a hairdresser. I only know Latin, and I have not the diploma which would enable me to sell my knowledge at a high price. If I were a doctor, I would sell for a hundred francs, what I now sell for a hundred sous; and I would supply it probably of an inferior quality, for my academic rank would be enough to sustain my reputation."

Sometimes, he would say to me:

"I have no rest in life except in the hours spent with you. Don't be afraid! you'll lose nothing by that. I'll make it up to you in the study by teaching you to speak twice as much Latin as the others."

One day, I grew bolder and offered him a cigarette. He stared at me with astonishment at first, then he gave a glance toward the door:

"If anyone were to come in, my dear boy!"

"Well, let us smoke at the window," said I.

And we went and leaned with our elbows on the window-sill facing the street, keeping our hands over the little rolls of tobacco wrapped up in tissue-paper so that they concealed them from view like a shell. Just opposite to us

was a laundry. Four women in white bodices were passing over the linen spread out before them the heavy and hot irons, letting a damp fume escape from them.

Suddenly, another, a fifth carrying on her arm a large basket which made her back stoop, came out to bring the customers their shirts and chemises, their handkerchiefs and their sheets. She stopped on the threshold as if she were already fatigued; then, she raised her eyes, smiled when she saw us smoking, flung at us, with her left hand, which was free, the sly kiss characteristic of a free-and-easy workingwoman; and she went away at a slow pace dragging her shoes after her.

She was a damsel of about twenty, small, rather thin, pale, rather pretty, with the manners of a street-wench, and eyes laughing under her-illcombed fair hair.

Père Piquedent, affected, began murmuring:

"What an occupation for a woman. Really a trade only fit for a horse."

And he spoke with emotion about the misery of the people. He had a heart which swelled with lofty democratic sentiment, and he referred to the fatiguing pursuits of the working class with phrases borrowed from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and with sobs in his throat.

Next day, as we were resting our elbows at the same window, the same workwoman perceived us, and cried out to us:

"Good day, my scholars!" in a comical sort of tone, while she made a contemptuous gesture with her hands.

I flung her a cigarette, which she immediately began to smoke. And the four

other ironers rushed out to the door with outstretched hands to get cigarettes also.

And, each day, a friendly relationship was being formed between the working-women of the pavement and the idlers of the boarding-school.

Père Piquedent was really a comic sight to look at. He trembled at being noticed, for he might have lost his place; and he made timid and ridiculous gestures, quite a theatrical display of amorousness, to which the women responded with a regular fusillade of kisses.

A perfidious idea sprang up in my head. One day, on entering our room, I said to the old usher in a low tone:

"You would not believe it, Monsieur Piquedent, I met the little washer-woman! You know the one—the woman who had the basket—and I spoke to her!"

He asked, rather excited by the tone I had taken:

"What did she say to you?"

"She said to me—goodness gracious!—she said she thought you were very nice. The fact of the matter is, I believe—that she is a little in love with you." I saw that he was growing pale. He exclaimed:

"She is laughing at me, of course. These things don't happen at my age."

I said gravely:

"How is that? You are very nice."

As I felt that my trick had produced its effect on him, I did not press the matter.

But every day I pretended that I had met the little laundress and that I had spoken to her about him, so that in the

end he believed me, and sent her ardent and earnest kisses.

Now, it happened that, one morning, on my way to the boarding-school, I really came across her. I accosted her without hesitation, as if I had known her for the last ten years.

"Good day, Mademoiselle. Are you quite well?"

"Very well, Monsieur, thank you."

"Will you have a cigarette?"

"Oh! not in the street."

"You can smoke it at home."

"In that case, I will."

"Let me tell you, Mademoiselle, there's something you don't know."

"What is that, Monsieur?"

"The old gentleman—my old professor, I mean—"

"Père Piquedent."

"Yes, Père Piquedent. So you know his name?"

"Faith, I do! What of that?"

"Well, he is in love with you!"

She burst out laughing like a crazy woman and exclaimed:

"This is only humbug!"

"Oh! no, 'tis no humbug! He keeps talking of you all the time he is giving lessons. I bet that he'll marry you!"

She ceased laughing. The idea of marriage makes every girl serious. Then, she repeated, with an incredulous air:

"This is humbug!"

"I swear to you 'tis true."

She picked up her basket which she had laid down at her feet.

"Well, we'll see," she said. And she went away.

Presently, when I had reached the boarding-school, I took Père Piquedent aside, and said:

"You must write to her: she is mad about you."

And he wrote a long letter of a soft and affectionate character full of phrases and circumlocutions, metaphors and similes, philosophy and academic gallantry; and I took on myself the responsibility of delivering it to the young woman.

She read it with gravity, with emotion; then, she murmured:

"How well he writes! It is easy to see he has got education! Does he really mean to marry me?"

I replied intrepidly: "Faith, he has lost his head about you!"

"Then he must invite me to dinner on Sunday at the *Île des Fleurs*."

I promised that she would be invited.

Père Piquedent was much touched by everything I told him about her.

I added:

"She loves you, Monsieur Piquedent, and I believe her to be a decent girl. It is not right to seduce her and then abandon her."

He replied in a firm tone:

"I hope I, too, am a decent man, my friend."

I confess I had at the time no plan. I was playing a practical joke, a school-boy's practical joke, nothing more. I had been aware of the simplicity of the old usher, his innocence, and his weakness. I amused myself without asking myself how it would turn out. I was eighteen, and had been for a long time looked upon at the lycée as a knowing practical joker.

So, it was agreed that Père Piquedent and I should set out in a hackney-coach for the ferry of *Queue de Vache*, that we should there pick up Angèle, and

that I should get them to come into my boat, for at this time I was fond of boating. I would then bring them to the Île des Fleurs, where the three of us would dine. I had made it my business to be present, in order the better to enjoy my triumph, and the usher, consenting to my arrangement, proved clearly, in fact, that he had lost his head by thus risking his post.

When we arrived at the ferry where my boat had been moored since morning, I saw in the grass, or rather above the tall weeds of the bank, an enormous red parasol, resembling a monstrous wild poppy. Under the parasol waited the little laundress in her Sunday clothes. I was surprised. She was really nice-looking, though pale, and graceful, though with a suburban gracefulness.

Père Piquedent raised his hat and bowed. She put out her hand toward him and they stared at one another without uttering a word. Then they stepped into my boat and I took the oars.

They were seated side by side on the seat near the stern. The usher was the first to speak:

"This is nice weather for a row in a boat."

She murmured: "Oh! yes."

She drew her hand through the current, skimming the water with her fingers, which raised up a thin transparent little stream like a sheet of glass. It made a light sound, a gentle ripple, as the boat moved along.

When they were in the restaurant, she took it on herself to speak and order dinner—fried fish, a chicken, and salad; then, she led us on toward the isle which she knew perfectly.

After this, she was gay, romping, and even rather mocking.

Up to the dessert, no question of love arose. I had treated them to champagne and Père Piquedent was tipsy. Herself slightly elevated, she called out to him:

"Monsieur Piquenez."

He said all of a sudden:

"Mademoiselle, Monsieur Raoul has communicated my sentiments to you."

She became as serious as a judge:

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Are you going to give any answer?"

"We never reply to these questions!"

He panted with emotion, and went on:

"After all, a day will come when I may make you like me."

She smiled: "You big fool! You are very nice."

"In short, Mademoiselle, do you think that, later on, we might—"

She hesitated a second; then in a trembling voice she said:

"Is it in order to marry me you say that? For never otherwise, you know."

"Yes, Mademoiselle!"

"Well, that's all right, Monsieur Piquedent!"

It is thus that these two silly creatures promised marriage to each other through the wiles of a reckless school-boy. But I did not believe that it was serious, nor indeed did they themselves, perhaps.

On her part there was a certain feeling of hesitation:

"You know, I have nothing—not four sous."

He stammered, for he was as drunk as Silenus:

"I have saved five thousand francs."

She exclaimed triumphantly:

"Then we can set up in business?"

He became restless: "In what business?"

"What do I know about that? We shall see. With five thousand francs, we could do many things. You don't want me to go and live in your boarding school, do you?"

He had not looked forward so far as this, and he stammered in great perplexity:

"What business could we set up in? It is not convenient, for all I know is Latin!"

She reflected in her turn, passing in review all the professions which she had longed for.

"You could not be a doctor?"

"No, I have not the diploma."

"Or a chemist?"

"No more than the other."

She uttered a cry, a cry of joy. She had discovered it.

"Then we'll buy a grocer's shop! Oh! what luck! we'll buy a grocer's shop! Not on a big scale, all the same; with five thousand francs one cannot go far."

He was shocked at the suggestion:

"No, I can't be a grocer. I am—I am—too well known. I only know Latin—that's all I know."

But she poured a glass of champagne down his throat. He drank it and was silent.

We got back into the boat. The night was dark, very dark. I saw clearly, however, that he had caught her by the waist, and that they were hugging each other again and again.

It was a frightful catastrophe. Our escapade was discovered with the result that Père Piquedent was dismissed. And my father, in a fit of anger, sent me to finish my course of philosophy at Ribaudet's School.

Six months later I passed for my degree of Bachelor of Arts. Then I went to study law in Paris, and I did not return to my native town till ten years after.

At the corner of the Rue de Serpent, a shop caught my eye. Over the door were the words: "Colonial products—Piquedent"; then underneath so as to enlighten the most ignorant: "Grocery."

I exclaimed: "*Quantum mutatus ab illo!*"

He raised his head, left his female customer, and rushed toward me with outstretched hands.

"Ah! my young friend, my young friend, here you are! What luck! What luck!"

A beautiful woman, very plump, abruptly left the counter and flung herself on my breast. I had some difficulty in recognizing her, so fat had she grown.

I asked: "So then you're going on well?"

Piquedent had gone back to weigh the groceries:

"Oh! very well, very well, very well. I have made three thousand francs clear this year!"

"And what about the Latin, Monsieur Piquedent?"

"Oh! goodness gracious! the Latin—the Latin—the Latin. Well, you see, it does not keep the pot boiling!"

Mother and Son!!!

WE were chatting in the smoking-room after a dinner at which only men were present. We talked about unexpected legacies, strange inheritances. Then M. le Brument, who was sometimes called "the illustrious master" and at other times the "illustrious advocate," came and stood with his back to the fire.

"I have," he said, "just now to search for an heir who disappeared under peculiarly terrible circumstances. It is one of those simple and ferocious dramas of ordinary life, a thing which possibly happens every day, and which is nevertheless one of the most dreadful things I know. Here are the facts:

"Nearly six months ago I got a message to come to the side of a dying woman. She said to me:

"Monsieur, I want to intrust to you the most delicate, the most difficult, and the most wearisome mission that can be conceived. Be good enough to take cognizance of my will, which is there on the table. A sum of five thousand francs is left to you as a fee if you do not succeed and of a hundred thousand francs if you do succeed. I want to have my son found after my death.'

"She asked me to assist her to sit up in the bed, in order that she might be able to speak with greater ease, for her voice, broken and gasping, was gurgling in her throat.

"I saw that I was in the house of a very rich person. The luxurious apartment with a certain simplicity in its luxury, was upholstered with materials

solid as the walls, and their soft surfaces imparted a caressing sensation, so that every word uttered seemed to penetrate their silent depths and to disappear and die there.

"The dying woman went on:

"You are the first to hear my horrible story. I will try to have strength enough to go on to the end of it. You must know everything so that you, whom I know to be a kind-hearted man as well as a man of the world should have a sincere desire to aid me with all your power.

"Listen to me.

"Before my marriage, I loved a young man, whose suit was rejected by my family because he was not rich enough. Not long afterward, I married a man of great wealth. I married him through ignorance, through obedience, through indifference, as young girls do marry.

"I had a child, a boy. My husband died in the course of a few years.

"He whom I had loved had got married, in his turn. When he saw that I was a widow, he was crushed by horrible grief at knowing that he was not free. He came to see me; he wept and sobbed so bitterly before my eyes that it was enough to break my heart. He at first came to see me as a friend. Perhaps I ought not to have seen him. What could I do? I was alone, so sad, so solitary, so hopeless! And I loved him still. What sufferings we women have sometimes to endure!

"I had only him in the world, my parents also being dead. He came frequently; he spent whole evenings with

me. I should not have let him come so often, seeing that he was married. But I had not enough will-power to prevent him from coming.

“How am I to tell you what next happened? He became my lover. How did this come about? Can I explain it? Can anyone explain such things? Do you think it could be otherwise when two human beings are drawn toward each other by the irresistible force of a passion by which each of them is possessed? Do you believe, Monsieur, that it is always in our power to resist, that we can keep up the struggle forever, and refuse to yield to the prayers, the supplications, the tears, the frenzied words, the appeals on bended knees, the transports of passion, with which we are pursued by the man we adore, whom we want to gratify in his slightest wishes, whom we desire to crowd with every possible happiness, and whom, if we are to be guided by a worldly code of honor, we must drive to despair. What strength would it not require? What a renunciation of happiness? what self-denial? and even what virtuous selfishness?

“In short, Monsieur, I was his mistress; and I was happy. For twelve years, I was happy. I became—and this was my greatest weakness and my greatest piece of cowardice—I became his wife’s friend.

“We brought up my son together; we made a man of him, a thorough man, intelligent, full of sense and resolution, of large and generous ideas. The boy reached the age of seventeen.

“He, the young man, was fond of my—my lover, almost as fond of him as I was myself, for he had been

equally cherished and cared for by both of us. He used to call him his “dear friend” and respected him immensely, having never received from him anything but wise counsels and a good example of rectitude, honor, and probity. He looked upon him as an old, loyal, and devoted comrade of his mother, as a sort of moral father, tutor, protector—how am I to describe it?

“Perhaps the reason why he never asked any questions was that he had been accustomed from his earliest years to see this man in the house, by his side, and by my side, always concerned about us both.

“One evening the three of us were to dine together (these were my principal festive occasions), and I waited for the two of them, asking myself which of them would be the first to arrive. The door opened; it was my old friend. I went toward him with outstretched arms; and he drew his lips toward mine in a long, delicious kiss.

“All of a sudden, a sound, a rustling which was barely audible, that mysterious sensation which indicated the presence of another person, made us start and turn round with a quick movement. Jean, my son, stood there, livid, staring at us.

“There was a moment of atrocious confusion. I drew back holding out my hands toward my son as if in supplication; but I could see him no longer. He had gone.

“We remained facing each other—my lover and I—crushed, unable to utter a word. I sank down on an arm-chair, and I felt a desire, a vague,

powerful desire to fly, to go out into the night and to disappear forever. Then, convulsive sobs rose up in my throat, and I wept, shaken with spasms, with my heart torn asunder, all my nerves writhing with the horrible sensation of an irremediable misfortune, and with that dreadful sense of shame which, in such moments as this, falls on a mother's heart.

"He looked at me in a scared fashion, not venturing to approach me or to speak to me or to touch me, for fear of the boy's return. At last he said:

"I am going to follow him—to talk to him—to explain matters to him. In short, I must see him and let him know—"

"And he hurried away.

"I waited—I waited in a distracted frame of mind, trembling at the least sound, convulsed with terror, and filled with some unutterably strange and intolerable emotion by every slight crackling of the fire in the grate.

"I waited for an hour, for two hours, feeling my heart swell with a dread I had never before experienced, with such an anguish as I would not wish the greatest of criminals to experience. Where was my son? What was he doing?

"About midnight, a messenger brought me a note from my lover. I still know its contents by heart:

"Has your son returned? I did not find him. I am down here. I do not want to go up at this hour."

"I wrote in pencil on the same slip of paper:

"Jean has not returned. You must go and find him."

"And I remained all night in the armchair, waiting for him.

"I felt as if I were going mad. I longed to run wildly about, to roll myself on the floor. And yet I did not even stir, but kept waiting hour after hour. What was going to happen? I tried to imagine, to guess. But I could form no conception, in spite of my efforts, in spite of the tortures of my soul!

"And now my apprehension was lest they might meet. What would they do in that case? What would my son do? My mind was lacerated by fearful doubts, by terrible suppositions.

"You understand what I mean, do you not, Monsieur?

"My chambermaid, who knew nothing, who understood nothing, was coming in every moment, believing, naturally that I had lost my reason. I had sent her away with a word or a movement of the hand. She went for the doctor, who found me in the throes of a nervous fit.

"I was put to bed. Then came an attack of brain-fever. When I regained consciousness, after a long illness, I saw beside my bed my—lover—alone. I exclaimed:

"My son? Where is my son?"

"He replied:

"I assure you every effort has been made by me to find him, but I have failed!"

"Then, becoming suddenly exasperated and even indignant,—for women are subject to such outbursts of unaccountable and unreasoning anger,—I said:

““I forbid you to come near me or to see me again unless you find him. Go away!”

“He did go away.

“I have never seen one or the other of them since, Monsieur, and thus I have lived for the last twenty years.

“Can you imagine what all this meant to me? Can you understand this monstrous punishment, this slow, perpetual laceration of a mother’s heart, this abominable, endless waiting? Endless, did I say? No: it is about to end, for I am dying. I am dying without ever again seeing either of them—either one or the other!

“He—the man I loved—has written to me every day for the last twenty years; and I—I have never consented to see him, even for one second; for I had a strange feeling that if he came back here, it would be at that very moment my son would again make his appearance! Ah! my son! my son! Is he dead? Is he living? Where is he hiding? Over there perhaps, at the other side of the ocean, in some country so far away that even its very name is unknown to me! Does he ever think of me? Ah! if he only knew! How cruel children are! Did he understand to what frightful suffering he condemned me, into what depths of despair, into what tortures, he cast me while I was still in the prime of life, leaving me to suffer like this even to this moment when I am going to die—me, his mother, who loved him with all the violence of a mother’s love! Oh! isn’t it cruel, cruel?

“You will tell him all this, Monsieur—will you not? You will repeat for him my last words:

““My child, my dear, dear child, be less harsh toward poor women! Life is already brutal and savage enough in its dealing with them. My dear son, think of what the existence of your poor mother has been ever since the day when you left her. My dear child, forgive her, and love her, now that she is dead, for she has had to endure the most frightful penance ever inflicted on a woman.”

“She gasped for breath shuddering, as if she had addressed her last words to her son and as if he stood by her bedside.

“Then she added:

“You will tell him also, Monsieur, that I never again saw—the other.’

“Once more she ceased speaking, then, in a broken voice she said:

“‘Leave me now, I beg of you. I want to die all alone, since they are not with me.’”

Maitre le Brument added:

“I left the house, Messieurs, crying like a fool, so vehemently, indeed, that my coachman turned round to stare at me.

“And to think that every day heaps of dramas like this are being enacted all around us!

“I have not found the son—that son—well, say what you like about him, but I call him that criminal son!”

He?*

My dear friend, you cannot understand it by any possible means, you say, and I perfectly believe you. You think I am going mad? It may be so, but not for the reasons which you suppose.

Yes, I am going to get married, and I will tell you what has led me to take that step.

My ideas and my convictions have not changed at all. I look upon all legalized cohabitation as utterly stupid, for I am certain that nine husbands out of ten are cuckolds; and they get no more than their deserts for having been idiotic enough to fetter their lives and renounce their freedom in love, the only happy and good thing in the world, and for having clipped the wings of fancy which continually drives us on toward all women. You know what I mean. More than ever I feel that I am incapable of loving one woman alone, because I shall always adore all the others too much. I should like to have a thousand arms, a thousand mouths, and a thousand—*temperaments*, to be able to strain an army of these charming creatures in my embrace at the same moment.

And yet I am going to get married!

I may add that I know very little of the girl who is going to become my wife to-morrow; I have only seen her four or five times. I know that there is nothing unpleasant about her, and that is enough for my purpose. She is small, fair, and stout; so of course the day after to-morrow I shall ardently wish for a tall, dark, thin woman.

She is not rich, and belongs to the middle classes. She is a girl such as

you may find by the gross, well adapted for matrimony, without any apparent faults, and with no particularly striking qualities. People say of her: "Mlle. Lajolle is a very nice girl," and to-morrow they will say: "What a very nice woman Madame Raymon is." She belongs, in a word, to that immense number of girls who make very good wives for us till the moment comes when we discover that we happen to prefer all other women to that particular woman we married.

"Well," you will say to me, "what on earth do you get married for?"

I hardly like to tell you the strange and seemingly improbable reason that urged me on to this senseless act; the fact, however, is that I am frightened of being alone!

I don't know how to tell you or to make you understand me, but my state of mind is so wretched that you will pity and despise me.

I do not want to be alone any longer at night; I want to feel that there is some one close to me touching me, a being who can speak and say something, no matter what it be.

I wish to be able to awaken somebody by my side, so that I may be able to ask some sudden question even, if I feel inclined, so that I may hear a human voice, and feel that there is some waking soul close to me, some one whose

*It was in this story that the first gleams of De Maupassant's approaching madness became apparent. Thenceforward he began to revel in the strange and terrible, until his malady had seized him wholly. "The Diary of a Madman," is in a similar vein.

reason is at work — so that when I hastily light the candle I may see some human face by my side—because—because—I am ashamed to confess it—because I am afraid of being alone.

Oh! you don't understand me yet.

I am not afraid of any danger; if a man were to come into the room I should kill him without trembling. I am not afraid of ghosts, nor do I believe in the supernatural. I am not afraid of dead people, for I believe in the total annihilation of every being that disappears from the face of this earth.

Well,—yes, well, it must be told; I am afraid of myself, afraid of that horrible sensation of incomprehensible fear.

You may laugh, if you like. It is terrible and I cannot get over it. I am afraid of the walls, of the furniture, of the familiar objects, which are animated, as far as I am concerned, by a kind of animal life. Above all, I am afraid of my own dreadful thoughts, of my reason, which seems as if it were about to leave me, driven away by a mysterious and invisible agony.

At first I feel a vague uneasiness in my mind which causes a cold shiver to run all over me. I look round, and of course nothing is to be seen, and I wish there were something there, no matter what, as long as it were something tangible: I am frightened, merely because I cannot understand my own terror.

If I speak, I am afraid of my own voice. If I walk, I am afraid of I know not what, behind the door, behind the curtains, in the cupboard, or under my bed, and yet all the time I know there is nothing anywhere, and I turn round

suddenly because I am afraid of what is behind me, although there is nothing there, and I know it.

I get agitated; I feel that my fear increases, and so I shut myself up in my own room, get into bed, and hide under the clothes, and there, cowering down rolled into a ball, I close my eyes in despair and remain thus for an indefinite time, remembering that my candle is alight on the table by my bedside, and that I ought to put it out, and yet—I dare not do it!

It is very terrible, is it not, to be like that?

Formerly I felt nothing of all that; I came home quite comfortably, and went up and down in my rooms without anything disturbing my calmness of mind. Had anyone told me that I should be attacked by a malady—for I can call it nothing else—of most improbable fear, such a stupid and terrible malady as it is, I should have laughed outright. I was certainly never afraid of opening the door in the dark; I used to go to bed slowly without locking it, and never got up in the middle of the night to make sure that everything was firmly closed.

It began last year in a very strange manner, on a damp autumn evening. When my servant had left the room, after I had dined, I asked myself what I was going to do. I walked up and down my room for some time, feeling tired without any reason for it, unable to work, and without enough energy to read. A fine rain was falling, and I felt unhappy, a prey to one of those fits of casual despondency which make use feel inclined to cry, or to talk, no

matter to whom, so as to shake off our depressing thoughts.

I felt that I was alone and that my rooms seemed to me to be more empty than they had ever been before. I was surrounded by a sensation of infinite and overwhelming solitude. What was I to do? I sat down, but then a kind of nervous impatience agitated my legs, so that I got up and began to walk about again. I was feverish, for my hands, which I had clasped behind me, as one often does when walking slowly, almost seemed to burn one another. Then suddenly a cold shiver ran down my back, and I thought the damp air might have penetrated into my room, so I lit the fire for the first time that year, and sat down again and looked at the flames. But soon I felt that I could not possibly remain quiet. So I got up again and determined to go out, to pull myself together, and to seek a friend to bear me company.

I could not find anyone, so I went on to the boulevards to try and meet some acquaintance or other there.

I was wretched everywhere, and the wet pavement glistened in the gaslight, while the oppressive mist of the almost impalpable rain lay heavily over the streets and seemed to obscure the light from the lamps.

I went on slowly, saying to myself, "I shall not find a soul to talk to."

I glanced into several *cafés*, from the Madeleine as far as the Faubourg Poissonnière, and saw many unhappy-looking individuals sitting at the tables, who did not seem even to have enough energy left to finish the refreshments they had ordered.

For a long time I wandered aimlessly

up and down, and about midnight I started off for home; I was very calm and very tired. My *concierge** opened the door at once, which was quite unusual for him, and I thought that another lodger had no doubt just come in.

When I go out I always double-lock the door of my room. Now I found it merely closed, which surprised me; but I supposed that some letters had been brought up for me in the course of the evening.

I went in, and found my fire still burning so that it lighted up the room a little. In the act of taking up a candle, I noticed somebody sitting in my armchair by the fire, warming his feet, with his neck toward me.

I was not in the slightest degree frightened. I thought very naturally that some friend or other had come to see me. No doubt the porter, whom I had told when I went out, had lent him his own key. In a moment I remembered all the circumstances of my return, how the street door had been opened immediately, and that my own door was only latched, and not locked.

I could see nothing of my friend but his head. He had evidently gone to sleep while waiting for me, so I went up to him to rouse him. I saw him quite clearly; his right arm was hanging down and his legs were crossed, while his head, which was somewhat inclined to the left of the armchair, seemed to indicate that he was asleep. "Who can it be" I asked myself. I could not see clearly, as the room was rather dark, so I put out my hand to

*Hall-porter.

touch him on the shoulder, and it came in contact with the back of the chair. There was nobody there; the seat was empty.

I fairly jumped with fright. For a moment I drew back as if some terrible danger had suddenly appeared in my way; then I turned round again, impelled by some imperious desire to look at the armchair again. I remained standing upright, panting with fear, so upset that I could not collect my thoughts, and ready to drop.

But I am naturally a cool man, and soon recovered myself. I thought: "It is a mere hallucination, that is all," and I immediately began to reflect about this phenomenon. Thoughts fly very quickly at such moments.

I had been suffering from a hallucination, that was an incontestable fact. My mind had been perfectly lucid and had acted regularly and logically, so there was nothing the matter with the brain. It was only my eyes that had been deceived; they had had a vision, one of those visions which lead simple folk to believe in miracles. It was a nervous accident to the optical apparatus, nothing more; the eyes were rather overwrought, perhaps.

I lit my candle, and when I stooped down to the fire in so doing, I noticed that I was trembling, and I raised myself up with a jump, as if somebody had touched me from behind.

I was certainly not by any means reassured.

I walked up and down a little, and hummed a tune or two. Then I double-locked my door, and felt rather reassured; now, at any rate, nobody could come in.

I sat down again, and thought over my adventure for a long time; then I went to bed, and put out my light.

For some minutes all went well; I lay quietly on my back. Then an irresistible desire seized me to look round the room, and I turned on to my side.

My fire was nearly out and the few glowing embers threw a faint light on the floor by the chair, where I fancied I saw the man sitting again.

I quickly struck a match, but I had been mistaken, for there was nothing there; I got up, however, and hid the chair behind my bed, and tried to get to sleep as the room was now dark. But I had not forgotten myself for more than five minutes when in my dream I saw all the scene which I had witnessed as clearly as if it were reality. I woke up with a start, and, having lit the candle, sat up in bed, without venturing even to try and go to sleep again.

Twice, however, sleep overcame me for a few moments in spite of myself, and twice I saw the same thing again, till I fancied I was going mad. When day broke, however, I thought that I was cured, and slept peacefully till noon.

It was all past and over. I had been feverish, had had the nightmare; I don't know what. I had been ill, in a word, but yet I thought that I was a great fool.

I enjoyed myself thoroughly that evening; I went and dined at a restaurant; afterward I went to the theater, and then started home. But as I got near the house I was seized by a strange feeling of uneasiness once more; I was afraid of *seeing* him again. I was not afraid of him, not afraid of his pres-

ence, in which I did not believe; but I was afraid of being deceived again; I was afraid of some fresh hallucination, afraid lest fear should take possession of me.

For more than an hour I wandered up and down the pavement; then I thought that I was really too foolish, and returned home. I panted so that I could scarcely get upstairs, and remained standing outside my door for more than ten minutes; then suddenly I took courage and pulled myself together. I inserted my key into the lock, and went in with a candle in my hand. I kicked open my half-open bedroom door, and gave a frightened look toward the fireplace; there was nothing there. A—h!

What a relief and what a delight! What a deliverance: I walked up and down briskly and boldly, but I was not altogether reassured, and kept turning round with a jump; the very shadows in the corners disquieted me.

I slept badly, and was constantly disturbed by imaginary noises, but I did not see *him*; no, that was all over.

Since that time I have been afraid of being alone at night. I feel that the specter is there, close to me, around me; but it has not appeared to me again. And supposing it did, what would it matter, since I do not believe in it and know that it is nothing?

It still worries me, however, because I am constantly thinking of it: *his right arm hanging down and his head inclined*

to the left like a man who was asleep— Enough of that, in Heaven's name! I don't want to think about it!

Why, however, am I so persistently possessed with this idea? His feet were close to the fire!

He haunts me; it is very stupid, but so it is. Who and what is HE? I know that he does not exist except in my cowardly imagination, in my fears, and in my agony! There—enough of that!

Yes, it is all very well for me to reason with myself, *to stiffen myself*, so to say; but I cannot remain at home, because I know he is there. I know I shall not see him again; he will not show himself again; that is all over. But he is there all the same in my thoughts. He remains invisible, but that does not prevent his being there. He is behind the doors, in the closed cupboards, in the wardrobe, under the bed, in every dark corner. If I open the door or the cupboard, if I take the candle to look under the bed and throw a light on to the dark places, he is there no longer, but I feel that he is behind me. I turn round, certain that I shall not see him, that I shall never see him again; but he is, none the less, behind me.

It is very stupid, it is dreadful; but what am I to do? I cannot help it.

But if there were two of us in the place, I feel certain that he would not be there any longer, for he is there just because I am alone, simply and solely because I am alone!



VOLUME VIII

The Avenger

WHEN M. Antoine Leuillet married the Widow Mathilde Souris, he had been in love with her for nearly ten years.

M. Souris had been his friend, his old college chum. Leuillet was very fond of him, but found him rather a muff. He often used to say: "That poor Souris will never set the Seine on fire."

When Souris married Mlle. Mathilde Duval, Leuillet was surprised and somewhat vexed, for he had a slight weakness for her. She was the daughter of a neighbor of his, a retired haberdasher with a good deal of money. She was pretty, well-mannered, and intelligent. She accepted Souris on account of his money.

Then Leuillet cherished hopes of his friend's wife. He was a handsome man, not at all stupid, and also well off. He was confident that he would succeed; he failed. Then he fell in love with her, and he was the sort of lover who is rendered timid, prudent, and embarrassed by intimacy with the husband. Mme. Souris fancied that he no longer meant anything serious by his attentions to her, and she became simply his friend. This state of affairs lasted nine years.

Now, one morning, Leuillet received a startling communication from the poor woman. Souris had died suddenly of aneurism of the heart.

He got a terrible shock, for they were of the same age; but, the very next moment a sensation of profound joy, of infinite relief, of deliverance, penetrated his body and soul. Mme. Souris was free.

He had the tact, however, to make such a display of grief as the occasion

required; he waited for the proper time to elapse, and attended to all the conventional usages. At the end of fifteen months, he married the widow.

His conduct was regarded as not only natural but generous. He had acted like a good friend and an honest man. In short, he was happy, quite happy.

They lived on terms of the closest confidence, having from the first understood and appreciated each other. One kept nothing secret from the other, and they told each other their inmost thoughts. Leuillet now loved his wife with a calm, trustful affection; he loved her as a tender, devoted partner, who is an equal and confidant. But there still lingered in his soul a singular and unaccountable grudge against the deceased Souris, who had been the first to possess this woman, who had even robbed her of her youth and her soul, and who had had even robbed her of her poetic attributes. The memory of the dead husband spoiled the happiness of the living husband; and this posthumous jealousy now began to torment Leuillet's heart day and night.

The result was that he was incessantly talking about Souris, asking a thousand minute and intimate questions about him, and seeking information as to all of his habits and personal characteristics. And he pursued him with railleries even into the depths of the tomb, recalling with self-satisfaction his oddities, emphasizing his absurdities, and pointing out his defects.

Constantly he would call out to his wife from one end to the other of the house:

"Hello, Mathilde!"

"Here I am dear."

"Come and let us have a chat."

She always came over to him, smiling, well aware that Souris was to be the subject of the chat, and anxious to gratify her second husband's harmless iad.

"I say! do you remember how Souris wanted one day to prove to me that small men are always better loved than big men?"

And he launched out into reflections unfavorable to the defunct husband, who was small, and discreetly complimentary to himself as he happened to be tall.

And Mme. Leuillet let him think that he was quite right; and she laughed very heartily, turned the first husband into ridicule in a playful fashion for the amusement of his successor, who always ended by remarking:

"Never mind! Souris was a muff!"

They were happy, quite happy. And Leuillet never ceased to testify his unabated attachment to his wife by all the usual manifestations.

Now, one night, when they happened to both be kept awake by a renewal of youthful ardor, Leuillet who held his wife clasped tightly in his arms and had his lips glued to hers said:

"Tell me this darling."

"What?"

"Souris—'tisn't easy to put the question—was he very—very loving?"

She gave him a warm kiss, as she murmured:

"Not as much as you, my sweet."

His male vanity was flattered and he went on:

"He must have been—rather a flat—eh?"

She did not answer. There was merely a sly little laugh on her face, which she pressed close to her husband's neck.

He persisted in his questions:

"Come now! Don't deny that he was a flat—well, I mean, rather an awkward sort of fellow?"

She nodded slightly.

"Well yes, rather awkward."

He went on:

"I'm sure he used to weary you many a night—isn't that so?"

This time she had an access of frankness, and she replied:

"Oh! yes."

He embraced her once more when she made this acknowledgment, and murmured:

"What an ass he was! You were not happy with him?"

"No. He was not always jolly."

Leuillet felt quite delighted, making a comparison in his own mind between his wife's former situation and her present one.

He remained silent for some time; then, with a fresh outburst of curiosity, he said:

"Tell me this!"

"What?"

"Will you be quite candid—quite candid with me?"

"Certainly, dear."

"Well, look here! Were you ever tempted to—to deceive this imbecile, Souris?"

Mme. Leuillet uttered a little "Oh!" in a shamefaced way and again cuddled her face closer to her husband's

chest. But he could see that she was laughing.

"Come now, confess it! He had a head just suited for a cuckold, this blockhead! It would be so funny! The good Souris! Oh! I say, darling, you might tell it to me—only to me!"

He emphasized the words "to me," feeling certain that if she wanted to show any taste when she deceived her husband, he, Leuillet would have been the man; and he quivered with joy at the expectation of this avowal, sure that if she had not been the virtuous woman she was he could not have won her then.

But she did not reply, laughing incessantly as if at the recollection of something infinitely comic.

Leuillet, in his turn, burst out laughing at the notion that he might have made a cuckold of Souris. What a good joke! What a capital lot of fun to be sure!

He exclaimed in a voice broken by convulsions of laughter:

"Oh! poor Souris! poor Souris! Ah! yes, he had that sort of head—oh, certainly he had!"

And Mme. Leuillet now twisted herself under the sheets laughing till the tears almost came into her eyes.

And Leuillet repeated: "Come, confess it! confess it! Be candid. You must know that it cannot be unpleasant to me to hear such a thing."

Then she stammered, still choking with laughter:

"Yes, yes."

Her husband pressed her for an answer:

"Yes what? Look here! tell me everything."

She was now laughing in a more subdued fashion, and, raising her mouth up to Leuillet's ear, which was held toward her in anticipation of some pleasant piece of confidence she whispered: "Yes—I did deceive him!"

He felt a cold shiver down his back, and utterly dumfounded, he gasped:

"You — you — did — really—deceive him?"

She was still under the impression that he thought the thing infinitely pleasant, and replied:

"Yes—really—really."

He was obliged to sit up in bed so great was the shock he received, holding his breath, just as overwhelmed as if he had just been told that he was a cuckold himself. At first he was unable to articulate properly; then after the lapse of a minute or so, he merely ejaculated:

"Ah!"

She, too, had stopped laughing now, realizing her mistake too late.

Leuillet at length asked:

"And with whom?"

She kept silent, cudgeling her brain to find some excuse.

He repeated his question:

"With whom?"

At last, she said:

"With a young man."

He turned toward her abruptly, and in a dry tone, said:

"Well, I suppose it wasn't with some kitchen-slut. I ask you who was the young man—do you understand?"

She did not answer. He tore away the sheet which she had drawn over her head, and pushed her into the middle of the bed, repeating:

"I want to know with what young man—do you understand?"

Then, she replied, having some difficulty in uttering the words:

"I only wanted to laugh." But he fairly shook with rage:

"What? How is that? You only wanted to laugh? So then you were making game of me? I'm not going to be satisfied with these evasions, let me tell you! I ask you what was the young man's name?"

She did not reply, but lay motionless on her back.

He caught hold of her arm and pressed it tightly:

"Do you hear me, I say? I want you to give me an answer when I speak to you."

Then she said, in nervous tones:

"I think you must be going mad! Let me alone!"

He trembled with fury, so exasperated that he scarcely knew what he was saying, and, shaking her with all his strength, he repeated:

"Do you hear me? do you hear me?"

She wrenched herself out of his grasp with a sudden movement and with the tips of her fingers slapped her husband on the nose. He entirely lost his temper, feeling that he had been

struck, and angrily pounced down on her.

He now held her under him, boxing her ears in a most violent manner, and exclaiming:

"Take that—and that—and that—there you are, you trollop, you strumpet—you strumpet!"

Then when he was out of breath, exhausted from beating her, he got up and went over to the bureau to get himself a glass of sugared orange-water, almost ready to faint after his exertion.

And she lay huddled up in bed, crying and heaving great sobs, feeling that there was an end of her happiness, and that it was all her own fault.

Then in the midst of her tears, she faltered:

"Listen, Antoine, come here! I told you a lie—listen! I'll explain it to you."

And now, prepared to defend herself, armed with excuses and subterfuges, she slightly raised her head all disheveled under her crumpled nightcap.

And he turning toward her, drew close to her, ashamed of having whacked her, but feeling still in his heart's core as a husband an inexhaustible hatred against the woman who had deceived his predecessor, Souris.

The Conservatory

MONSIEUR and Mme. Lerebour were about the same age. But Monsieur looked younger, although he was the weaker of the two. They lived near

Mantes in a pretty estate which they had bought after having made a fortune by selling printed cottons.

The house was surrounded by a

beautiful garden, containing a poultry yard, Chinese *kiosques*, and a little conservatory at the end of the avenue. M. Lerebour was short, round and jovial, with the joviality of a shopkeeper of epicurean tastes. His wife, lean, self-willed, and always discontented had not succeeded in overcoming her husband's good-humor. She dyed her hair, and sometimes read novels, which made dreams pass through her soul, although she affected to despise writings of this kind. People said she was a woman of strong passions without her having ever done anything to sustain that opinion. But her husband sometimes said: "My wife is a gay woman," with a certain knowing air which awakened suppositions.

For some years past, however, she had shown herself aggressive toward M. Lerebour, always irritated and hard, as if a secret and unavoidable grief tormented her. A sort of misunderstanding was the result. They scarcely spoke to each other, and Madame, whose name was Palmyre, was incessantly heaping unkind compliments, wounding allusions, bitter words, without any apparent reason, on Monsieur, whose name was Gustave.

He bent his back, bored though gay, all the same, endowed with such a fund of contentment that he endured her domestic bickerings. He asked himself, nevertheless, what unknown cause could have thus embittered his spouse, for he had a strong feeling that her irritation had a hidden reason, but so difficult to penetrate that his efforts to do so were in vain.

He often said to her: "Look here my dear, tell me what you have against me.

I feel that you are concealing something."

She invariably replied: "But there is nothing the matter with me, absolutely nothing. Besides, if I had some cause for discontent, it would be for you to guess at it. I don't like men who understand nothing, who are so soft and incapable that one must come to their assistance to make them grasp the slightest thing."

He murmured dejectedly: "I see clearly that you don't want to say anything."

And he went away still striving to unravel the mystery.

The nights especially became painful to him, for they always shared the same bed, as one does in good and simple households. It was not, therefore, mere ordinary ill-temper that she displayed toward him. She chose the moment when they were lying side by side to load him with the liveliest raillery. She reproached him principally with his corpulence: "You take up all the room, you are becoming so fat."

And she forced him to get up on the slightest pretext, sending him downstairs to look for a newspaper she had forgotten, or a bottle of orange-water, which he failed to find as she had herself hidden it away. And she exclaimed in a furious and sarcastic tone: "You might, however, know where to find it, you big booby!" When he had been wandering about the sleeping house for a whole hour, and returned to the room empty-handed, the only thanks she gave him was to say: "Come, get back to bed, it will make you thin to take a little walking; you

are becoming as flabby as a sponge."

She kept waking him every moment by declaring that she was suffering from cramps in her stomach, and insisting on his rubbing her with flannel soaked in eau de Cologne. He would make efforts to cure her, grieved at seeing her ill, and would propose to go and rouse up Céleste, their maid. Then she would get angry, crying: "You must be a fool. Well! it is over; I am better now, so go back to bed, you big lout."

To his question: "Are you quite sure you have got better?" she would fling this harsh answer in his face:

"Yes, hold your tongue! let me sleep! Don't worry me any more about it! You are incapable of doing anything, even of rubbing a woman."

He got into a state of deep dejection: "But, my darling—"

She became exasperated: "I want no 'buts.' Enough, isn't it? Give me some rest now. And she turned her face to the wall.

Now, one night, she shook him so abruptly that he started up in terror, and found himself in a sitting posture with a rapidity which was not habitual to him. He stammered:

"What? What's the matter?"

She caught him by the arm and pinched him till he cried out. Then she gave him a box on the ear: "I hear some noise in the house."

Accustomed to the frequent alarms of Mme. Lerebour he did not disturb himself very much and quietly asked:

"What sort of noise, my darling?"

She trembled as if she were in a state of terror and replied: "Noise—

why noise—the noise of footsteps. There is some one."

He remained incredulous: "Some one? You think so? But no; you must be mistaken. Besides whom do you think it can be?"

She shuddered:

Who? Who? Why, thieves, of course, you imbecile!"

He plunged softly under the sheets: "Ah! no, my darling! There is nobody. I dare say you dreamed it."

Then, she flung off the coverlet, and, jumping out of bed, in a rage: "Why, then, you are just as cowardly as you are incapable! In any case, I shall not let myself be massacred owing to your pusillanimity." And snatching up the tongs from the fireplace, she placed herself in a fighting attitude in front of the bolted door.

Moved by his wife's display of valor, perhaps ashamed, he rose up in his turn sulkily, and without taking off his nightcap he seized the shovel, and placed himself face to face with his better half.

They waited for twenty minutes in the deepest silence. No fresh noise disturbed the repose of the house. Then, Madame, becoming furious, got back into bed saying: "Nevertheless I'm sure there is some one."

In order to avoid anything like a quarrel he did not make an allusion during the next day to this panic. But, next night, Mme. Lerebour woke up her husband with more violence still than the night before, and, panting, she stammered: "Gustave, Gustave, somebody has just opened the garden-gate!"

Astonished at this persistence, he

fancied that his wife must have had an attack of somnambulism, and was about to make an effort to shake off this dangerous state when he thought he heard, in fact, a slight sound under the walls of the house. He rose up, rushed to the window and he saw—yes, he saw—a white figure quickly passing along one of the garden-walks.

He murmured, as if he were on the point of fainting: "There is some one." Then, he recovered his self-possession, felt more resolute, and suddenly carried away by the formidable anger of a proprietor whose territory has been encroached upon, he said: "Wait! wait, and you shall see!"

He rushed toward the writing-desk, opened it, took out the revolver, and dashed out into the stairs. His wife, filled with consternation, followed him, exclaiming: "Gustave, Gustave, don't abandon me, don't leave me alone! Gustave! Gustave!"

But he scarcely heard her; he had by this time laid his hand on the garden-gate.

Then she went back rapidly and barricaded herself in the conjugal chamber.

* * * * *

She waited five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. Wild terror took possession of her. Without doubt, they had killed him; they had seized, garroted, strangled him. She would have preferred to hear the report of the six barrels of the revolver, to know that he was fighting, that he was defending himself. But this great silence, this terrifying silence of the country overwhelmed her.

She rang for Céleste. Céleste did

not come in answer to the bell. She rang again, on the point of swooning, of sinking into unconsciousness. The entire house remained without a sound. She pressed her burning forehead to the window, seeking to peer through the darkness without. She distinguished nothing but the blacker shadows of a row of trees beside the gray ruts on the roads.

It struck half past twelve. Her husband had been absent for forty-five minutes. She would never see him again. No! she would never see him again. And she fell on her knees sobbing.

Two light knocks at the door of the apartment called out to her: "Open, pray, Palmyre—'tis I." She rushed forward, opened the door, and standing in front of him, with her arms akimbo and her eyes full of tears, exclaimed: "Where have you been, you dirty brute? Ah! you left me here by myself nearly dead of fright. You care no more about me than if I never existed."

He closed the bedroom door; then he laughed and laughed like a madman, grinning from ear to ear, with his hands on his sides, till the tears came into his eyes.

Mme. Lerebour, stupefied, remained silent.

He stammered: "It was—it was—Céleste, who had an appointment in the conservatory. If you knew what—what I have seen—"

She had turned pale, choking with indignation.

"Eh? Do you tell me so? Céleste? In my house? in—my—house—in my—my—in my conservatory. And you

have not killed the man who was her accomplice! You had a revolver and did not kill him? In my house—in my house.”

She sat down, not feeling able to do anything.

He danced a caper, snapped his fingers, smacked his tongue, and, still laughing: “If you knew—if you knew—” He suddenly gave her a kiss.

She tore herself away from him and in a voice broken with rage, she said: “I will not let this girl remain one day longer in my house, do you hear? Not one day—not one hour. When she returns to the house, we will throw her out.”

M. Lerebour had seized his wife by the waist, and he planted rows of kisses on her neck, loud kisses, as in by-gone days. She became silent once more, petrified with astonishment. But he, holding her clasped in his arms, drew her softly toward the bed.

* * * * *

Toward half past nine in the morning, Céleste, astonished at not having yet seen her master and mistress, who always rose early, came and knocked softly at their door.

They were in bed, and were gaily

chatting side by side. She stood there astonished, and said: “Madame, it is the coffee.”

Mme. Lerebour said in a very soft voice: “Bring it here to me, my girl. We are a little tired; we have slept very badly.”

Scarcely had the servant-maid gone than M. Lerebour began to laugh again, tickling his wife under the chin, and repeating: “If you knew. Oh! if you knew.”

But she caught his hands: “Look here! keep quiet, my darling, if you laugh like this you will make yourself ill.”

And she kissed him softly on the eyes.

* * * * *

Mme. Lerebour has no more fits of sourness. Sometimes on bright nights the husband and wife come, with furtive steps, along the clumps of trees and flower-beds as far as the little conservatory at the end of the garden. And they remain there planted side by side with their faces pressed against the glass as if they were looking at something strange and full of interest going on within.

They have increased Céleste’s wages. But M. Lerebour has got thin.

Letter Found on a Corpse

YOU ask me, Madame, whether I am laughing at you? You cannot believe that a man has never been smitten with love. Well, no, I have never loved, never!

What is the cause of this? I really

cannot tell. Never have I been under the influence of that sort of intoxication of the heart which we call love! Never have I lived in that dream, in that exaltation, in that state of madness into which the image of a woman casts

us. I have never been pursued, haunted, roused to fever-heat, lifted up to Paradise by the thought of meeting, or by the possession of, a being who had suddenly become for me more desirable than any good fortune, more beautiful than any other creature, more important than the whole world! I have never wept, I have never suffered on account of any of you. I have not passed my nights thinking of one woman without closing my eyes. I have no experience of waking up with the thought and the memory of her shedding her illumination on me. I have never known the wild desperation of hope when she was about to come, or the divine sadness of regret when she parted with me, leaving behind her in the room a delicate odor of violet-powder.

I have never been in love.

I, too, have often asked myself why is this. And truly I can scarcely tell. Nevertheless, I have found some reasons for it; but they are of a metaphysical character, and perhaps you will not be able to appreciate them.

I suppose I sit too much in judgment on women to submit much to their fascination. I ask you to forgive me for this remark. I am going to explain what I mean. In every creature there is a moral being and a physical being. In order to love, it would be necessary for me to find a harmony between these two beings which I have never found. One has always too great a predominance over the other, sometimes the physical.

The intellect which we have a right to require in a woman, in order to love her, is not the same as virile intellect.

It is more and it is less. A woman must have a mind open, delicate, sensitive, refined, impressionable. She has no need of either power or initiative in thought, but she must have kindness, elegance, tenderness, coquetry, and that faculty of assimilation which, in a little while, raises her to an equality with him who shares her life. Her greatest quality must be tact, that subtle sense which is to the mind what touch is to the body. It reveals to her a thousand little things, contours, angles, and forms in the intellectual life.

Very frequently pretty women have not intellect to correspond with their personal charms. Now the slightest lack of harmony strikes me and pains me at the first glance. In friendship, this is not of importance. Friendship is a compact in which one fairly divides defects and merits. We may judge of friends, whether man or woman, take into account the good they possess, neglect the evil that is in them, appreciate their value exactly, while giving ourselves up to an intimate sympathy of a deep and fascinating character.

In order to love, one must be blind, surrender oneself absolutely, see nothing, reason from nothing, understand nothing. One must adore the weakness as well as the beauty of the beloved object, renounce all judgment, all reflection, all perspicacity.

I am incapable of such blindness, and rebel against a seductiveness not founded on reason. This is not all. I have such a high and subtle idea of harmony that nothing can ever realize my ideal. But you will call me a madman. Listen to me. A woman, in my

opinion, may have an exquisite soul and a charming body without that body and that soul being in perfect accord with one another. I mean that persons who have noses made in certain shape are not to be expected to think in a certain fashion. The fat have no right to make use of the same words and phrases as the thin. You who have blue eyes, Madame, cannot look at life, and judge of things and events as if you had black eyes. The shades of your eyes should correspond, by a sort of fatality, with the shades of your thought. In perceiving these things I have the scent of a bloodhound. Laugh if you like, but it is so.

And yet I imagined that I was in love for an hour, for a day. I had foolishly yielded to the influence of surrounding circumstances. I allowed myself to be beguiled by the mirage of an aurora. Would you like to hear this short history?

* * * * *

I met, one evening, a pretty, enthusiastic woman who wanted for the purpose of humoring a poetic fancy, to spend a night with me in a boat on a river. I would have preferred—but, no matter, I consented.

It was in the month of June. My fair companion chose a moonlight night in order to excite her imagination all the better.

We had dined at a riverside inn, and then we set out in the boat about ten o'clock. I thought it a rather foolish kind of adventure; but as my companion pleased me I did not bother myself too much about this. I sat down on the seat facing her, seized the oars, and off we started.

I could not deny that the scene was picturesque. We glided past a wooded isle full of nightingales, and the current carried us rapidly over the river covered with silvery ripples. The grasshoppers uttered their shrill, monotonous cry; the frogs croaked in the grass by the river's bank, and the lapping of the water as it flowed on made around us a kind of confused, almost imperceptible murmur, disquieting, which gave us a vague sensation of mysterious fear.

The sweet charm of warm nights and of streams glittering in the moonlight penetrated us. It seemed bliss to live and to float thus, to dream and to feel by one's side a young woman sympathetic and beautiful.

I was somewhat affected, somewhat agitated, somewhat intoxicated by the pale brightness of the night and the consciousness of my proximity to a lovely woman.

"Come and sit beside me," she said.

I obeyed. She went on:

"Recite some verses for me."

This appeared to me rather too much. I declined; she persisted. She certainly wanted to have the utmost pleasure, the whole orchestra of sentiment, from the moon to the rhymes of poets. In the end, I had to yield, and, as if in mockery, I recited for her a charming little poem by Louis Bouilhet, of which the following are a few strophes:

"I hate the poet who with tearful eye
Murmurs some name while gazing
tow'rds a star,
Who sees no magic in the earth or sky,
Unless Lizette or Ninon be not far.

The bard who in all Nature nothing sees
Divine, unless a petticoat he ties
Amorously to the branches of the trees,
Or nightcap to the grass, is scarcely
wise.

He has not heard the eternal's thunder-
tone,

The voice of Nature in her various
moods,

He cannot tread the dim ravines alone,
And of no woman dream 'mid
whispering woods."

I expected some reproaches. Nothing
of the sort. She murmured:

"How true it is!"

I remained stupefied. Had she
understood?

Our boat was gradually drawing
nearer to the bank, and got entangled
under a willow which impeded its prog-
ress. I drew my arm around my com-
panion's waist, and very gently moved
my lips toward her neck. But she re-
pulsed me with an abrupt, angry move-
ment:

"Have done, pray! You are rude!"

I tried to draw her toward me. She
resisted, caught hold of the tree and
nearly upset us both into the water. I
deemed it the prudent course to cease
my importunities.

She went on:

"I would rather have you capsized.
I feel so happy. I want to dream—that
is so nice." Then, in a slightly
malicious tone, she added:

"Have you, then, already forgotten
the verses you recited for me just
now?"

She was right. I became silent.

She went on:

"Come! row!"

And I plied at the oars once more.
I began to find the night long and to

see the absurdity of my conduct. My
companion said to me:

"Will you make me a promise?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"To remain quiet, well-behaved, and
discreet, if I permit you—"

"What? Say what you mean!"

"Here is what I mean! I want to
lie down on my back in the bottom of
of the boat with you by my side. I
forbid you to touch me to embrace me
—in short to—caress me."

"If you move, I'll capsize the boat."

And then we lay down side by side,
our eyes turned toward the sky, while
the boat glided slowly through the
water. We were rocked by the gentle
movement of the shallop. The light
sounds of the night came to us more
distinctly in the bottom of the boat,
sometimes causing us to start. And I
felt springing up within me a strange,
poignant emotion, an infinite tender-
ness something like an irresistible im-
pulse to open my arms in order to em-
brace, to open my heart in order to
love, to give myself, to give my
thoughts, my body, my life, my entire
being to some one.

My companion murmured like one in
a dream:

"Where are we? Where are we go-
ing? It seems to me that I am quit-
ting the earth. How sweet it is! Ah!
if you loved me—a little!"

My heart began to throb. I had no
answer to give. It seemed to me that
I loved her. I had not longer any vio-
lent desire. I felt happy there by her
side and that was enough for me.

And thus we remained for a long,
long time without stirring. We caught
each other's hands; some delightful

force rendered us motionless, an unknown force stronger than ourselves, an alliance, chaste, intimate, absolute, of our persons lying there touching each other. What was this? How do I know? Love perhaps.

Little by little, the dawn appeared. It was three o'clock in the morning. Slowly, a great brightness spread over the sky. The boat knocked against something. I rose up. We had come close to a tiny islet.

But I remained ravished in a state of ecstasy. In front of us stretched the shining firmament, red, rosy, violet, spotted with fiery clouds resembling golden vapors. The river was glowing with purple, and three houses on one side of it seemed to be burning.

I bent toward my companion. I was going to say: "Oh! look!" But I held my tongue, quite dazed, and I could no longer see anything except her. She, too, was rosy, with the rosy flesh tints with which must have mingled a little the hue of the sky. Her tresses were rosy; her eyes were rosy;

her teeth were rosy; her dress, her laces, her smile, all were rosy. And in truth I believed, so overpowering was the illusion, that the aurora was there before me.

She rose softly to her feet, holding out her lips to me; and I moved toward her, trembling, delirious, feeling indeed that I was going to kiss Heaven, to kiss happiness, to kiss a dream which had become a woman, to kiss an ideal which had descended into human flesh.

She said to me: "You have a caterpillar in your hair." And suddenly I felt myself becoming as sad as if I had lost all hope in life.

That is all, Madame. It is puerile, stupid. But I am sure that since that day it would be impossible for me to love. And yet—who can tell?

[The young man upon whom this letter was found was yesterday taken out of the Seine between Bougival and Marly. An obliging bargeman, who had searched the pockets in order to ascertain the name of the deceased, brought this paper to the author.]

The Little Cask

JULES CHICOT, the innkeeper, who lived at Épreville, pulled up his tilbury in front of Mother Magloire's farmhouse. He was a tall man of about forty, fat and with a red face and was generally said to be a very knowing customer.

He hitched his horse up to the gatepost and went in. He owned some land adjoining that of the old woman.

He had been coveting her plot for a long while, and had tried in vain to buy it a score of times, but she had always obstinately refused to part with it.

"I was born here, and here I mean to die," was all she said.

He found her peeling potatoes outside the farmhouse door. She was a woman of about seventy-two, very thin,

shriveled and wrinkled, almost dried-up, in fact, and much bent, but as active and untiring as a girl. Chicot patted her on the back in a very friendly fashion, and then sat down by her on a stool.

"Well, Mother, you are always pretty well and hearty, I am glad to see."

"Nothing to complain of, considering, thank you. And how are you, Monsieur Chicot?"

"Oh! pretty well, thank you, except a few rheumatic pains occasionally; otherwise, I should have nothing to complain of."

"That's all the better!"

And she said no more, while Chicot watched her going on with her work. Her crooked, knotty fingers, hard as a lobster's claws, seized the tubers, which were lying in a pail, as if they had been a pair of pincers, and peeled them rapidly, cutting off long strips of skin with an old knife which she held in the other hand, throwing the potatoes into the water as they were done. Three daring fowls jumped one after another into her lap, seized a bit of peel and then ran away as fast as their legs would carry them with it in their beaks.

Chicot seemed embarrassed, anxious, with something on the tip of his tongue which he could not get out. At last he said hurriedly:

"I say, Mother Magloire—"

"Well, what is it?"

"You are quite sure that you do not want to sell your farm?"

"Certainly not; you may make up your mind to that. What I have said, I have said, so don't refer to it again."

"Very well; only I fancy I have

thought of an arrangement that might suit us both very well."

"What is it?"

"Here you are: You shall sell it to me, and keep it all the same. You don't understand? Very well, so just follow me in what I am going to say."

The old woman left off peeling her potatoes and looked at the innkeeper attentively from under her bushy eyebrows, and went on:

"Let me explain myself: Every month I will give you a hundred and fifty francs.* You understand me, I suppose? Every month I will come and bring you thirty crows,† and it will not make the slightest difference in your life—not the very slightest. You will have your own home just as you have now, will not trouble yourself about me, and will owe me nothing; all you will have to do will be to take my money: Will that arrangement suit you?"

He looked at her good-humoredly, one might have said benevolently, and the old woman returned his looks distrustfully, as if she suspected a trap, and said:

"It seems all right, as far as I am concerned, but it will not give you the farm."

"Never mind about that," he said, "you will remain here as long as it pleases God Almighty to let you live; it will be your home. Only you will sign a deed before a lawyer making it over to me after your death. You have no children, only nephews and nieces for whom you don't care a straw. Will

*As near as possible \$30.

†The old name, still applied locally to a five-franc piece.

that suit you? You will keep everything during your life, and I will give the thirty crowns a month. It is a pure gain as far as you are concerned."

The old woman was surprised, rather uneasy, but, nevertheless, very much tempted to agree and answered:

"I don't say that I will not agree to it, but I must think about it. Come back in a week and we will talk it over again, and I will then give you my definite answer."

And Chicot went off, as happy as a king who had conquered an empire.

Mother Magloire was thoughtful, and did not sleep at all that night; in fact, for four days she was in a fever of hesitation. She *smelled*, so to say, that there was something underneath the offer which was not to her advantage; but then the thought of thirty crowns a month, of all those coins chinking in her apron, falling to her, as it were, from the skies without her doing anything for it filled her with covetousness.

She went to the notary and told him about it. He advised her to accept Chicot's offer, but said she ought to ask for a monthly payment of fifty crowns instead of thirty, as her farm was worth sixty thousand francs* at the lowest calculation.

"If you live fifteen years longer," he said, "even then he will only have paid forty-five thousand francs† for it."

The old woman trembled with joy at this prospect of getting fifty crowns a month; but she was still suspicious, fearing some trick and she remained a long time with the lawyer asking questions without being able to make up her mind to go. At last she gave

him instructions to draw up the deed, and returned home with her head in a whirl, just as if she had just drunk four jugs of new cider.

When Chicot came again to receive her answer she took a lot of persuading, and declared that she could not make up her mind to agree to his proposal, though she was all the time on tenterhooks lest he should not consent to give the fifty crowns. At last, when he grew urgent, she told him what she expected for her farm.

He looked surprised and disappointed, and refused.

Then, in order to convince him, she began to talk about the probable duration of her life.

"I am certainly not likely to live more than five or six years longer. I am nearly seventy-three, and far from strong, even considering my age. The other evening I thought I was going to die, and could hardly manage to crawl into bed."

But Chicot was not going to be taken in.

"Come, come, old lady, you are as strong as the church tower, and will live till you are a hundred at least; you will be sure to see me put underground first."

The whole day was spent in discussing the money, and as the old woman would not give way, the landlord consented to give the fifty crowns, and she insisted upon having ten crowns over and above to strike the bargain.

Three years passed by, and the old dame did not seem to have grown a

*\$12000.

†\$9000.

day older. Chicot was in despair. It seemed to him as if he had been paying that annuity for fifty years, that he had been taken in, outwitted, and ruined. From time to time he went to see his annuitant, just as one goes in July to see when the harvest is likely to begin. She always met him with a cunning look, and one would have felt inclined to think that she was congratulating herself on the trick she had played on him. Seeing how well and hearty she seemed, he very soon got into his tilbury again, growling to himself:

“Will you never die, you old brute?”

He did not know what to do, and felt inclined to strangle her when he saw her. He hated her with a ferocious, cunning hatred, the hatred of a peasant who has been robbed, and began to cast about for means of getting rid of her.

One day he came to see her again, rubbing his hands like he did the first time when he proposed the bargain, and, after having chatted for a few minutes, he said:

“Why do you never come and have a bit of dinner at my place when you are in Épreville? The people are talking about it and saying that we are not on friendly terms, and that pains me. You know it will cost you nothing if you come, for I don’t look at the price of a dinner. Come whenever you feel inclined; I shall be very glad to see you.”

Old Mother Magloire did not need to be told twice, and the next day but one—she was going to the town in any case, it being market-day, in her gig, driven by her man—she, without any

demur, put her trap up in Chicot’s stable, and went in search of her promised dinner.

The publican was delighted, and treated her like a princess, giving her roast fowl, black pudding, leg of mutton, and bacon and cabbage. But she ate next to nothing. She had always been a small eater and had generally lived on a little soup and a crust of bread-and-butter.

Chicot was disappointed, and pressed her to eat more, but she refused. She would drink next to nothing either, and declined any coffee, so he asked her:

“But surely, you will take a little drop of brandy or liquor?”

“Well, as to that, I don’t know that I will refuse.” Whereupon he shouted out:

“Rosalie, bring the superfine brandy, —*the special*,—you know.”

The servant appeared, carrying a long bottle ornamented with a paper vine-leaf, and he filled two liquor glasses.

“Just try that; you will find it first-rate.”

The good woman drank it slowly in sips, so as to make the pleasure last all the longer, and when she had finished her glass, draining the last drops so as to make sure of all, she said:

“Yes, that is first-rate!”

Almost before she had said it, Chicot had poured her out another glassful. She wished to refuse, but it was too late, and she drank it very slowly, as she had done the first, and he asked her to have a third. She objected, but he persisted.

“It is as mild as milk, you know. I

can drink ten or a dozen without any ill effect; it goes down like sugar, and leaves no headache behind; one would think that it evaporated on the tongue. It is the most wholesome thing you can drink."

She took it, for she really wished to have it, but she left half the glass.

Then Chicot, in an excess of generosity said:

"Look here, as it is so much to your taste, I will give you a small keg of it, just to show that you and I are still excellent friends." Then she took her leave, feeling slightly overcome by the effects of what she had drunk.

The next day the innkeeper drove into her yard, and took a little iron-hooped keg out of his gig. He insisted on her tasting the contents, to make sure it was the same delicious article, and, when they had each of them drunk three more glasses, he said, as he was going away:

"Well, you know, when it is all gone, there is more left; don't be modest for I shall not mind. The sooner it is finished the better pleased I shall be."

Four days later he came again. The old woman was outside her door cutting up the bread for her soup.

He went up to her, and put his face

close to hers, so that he might smell her breath; and when he smelled the alcohol he felt pleased.

"I suppose you will give me a glass of *the special?*" he said. And they had three glasses each.

Soon, however, it began to be whispered abroad that Mother Magloire was in the habit of getting drunk all by herself. She was picked up in her kitchen, then in her yard, then in the roads in the neighborhood, and was often brought home like a log.

Chicot did not go near her any more, and when people spoke to him about her, he used to say, putting on a distressed look:

"It is a real pity that she should have taken to drink at her age; but when people get old there is no remedy. It will be the death of her in the long run."

And it certainly was the death of her. She died the next winter. About Christmas time she fell down unconscious in the snow, and was found dead the next morning.

And when Chicot came in for the farm he said:

"It was very stupid of her; if she had not taken to drink she might very well have lived for ten years longer."

Poor Andrew

THE lawyer's house looked on to the Square. Behind it, there was a nice, well-kept garden, with a back entrance into a narrow street which was almost always deserted, and from which it was separated by a wall.

At the bottom of that garden Maître* Moreau's wife had promised, for the first time, to meet Captain

*Maitre (Master) is the official title of French lawyers.

Sommerive, who had been making love to her for a long time.

Her husband had gone to Paris for a week, so she was quite free for the time being. The Captain had begged so hard, and he loved her so ardently, and she felt so isolated, so misunderstood, so neglected amid all the law business which seemed to be her husband's sole pleasure, that she had given away her heart without even asking herself whether he would give her anything else at some future time.

Then, after some months of Platonic love, of pressing of hands, of kisses rapidly stolen behind a door, the Captain had declared that he would ask permission to exchange, and leave town immediately, if she would not grant him a meeting, a real meeting, during her husband's absence. So at length she yielded to his importunity.

Just then she was waiting, close against the wall, with a beating heart, when at length she heard somebody climbing up the wall, she nearly ran away.

Suppose it were not he, but a thief? But no; some one called out softly, "Matilda!" and when she replied, "Etienne!" a man jumped on to the path with a crash.

It was he,—and what a kiss!

For a long time they remained in each other's arms, with united lips. But suddenly a fine rain began to fall, and the drops from the leaves fell on to her neck and made her start. Whereupon he said:

"Matilda, my adored one, my darling, my angel let us go indoors. It is twelve o'clock, we can have nothing

to fear; please let us go in."

"No, dearest; I am too frightened."

But he held her in his arms, and whispered in her ear:

"Your servants sleep on the third floor, looking on to the Square, and your room, on the first, looks on to the garden, so nobody can hear us. I love you so that I wish to love you entirely from head to foot." And he embraced her vehemently.

She resisted still, frightened and even ashamed. But he put his arms round her, lifted her up, and carried her off through the rain, which was by this time descending in torrents.

The door was open; they groped their way upstairs; and when they were in the room he bolted the door while she lit a candle.

Then she fell, half fainting, into a chair, while he kneeled down beside her.

At last, she said, panting:

"No! no! Etienne, please let me remain a virtuous woman; I should be too angry with you afterward; and after all, it is so horrid, so common. Cannot we love each other with a spiritual love only? Oh! Etienne!"

But he was inexorable, and then she tried to get up and escape from his attacks. In her fright she ran to the bed in order to hide herself behind the curtains; but it was a dangerous place of refuge, and he followed her. But in haste he took off his sword too quickly, and it fell on to the floor with a crash. And then a prolonged, shrill child's cry came from the next room, the door of which had remained open.

"You have awakened the child," she

whispered, "and perhaps he will not go to sleep again."

He was only fifteen months old and slept in a room adjoining out of hers, so that she might be able to hear him.

The Captain exclaimed ardently:

"What does it matter, Matilda? How I love you; you must come to me, Matilda."

But she struggled and resisted in her fright.

"No! no! Just listen how he is crying; he will wake up the nurse, and what should we do if she were to come? We should be lost. Just listen to me, Etienne. When he screams at night his father always takes him into our bed, and he is quiet immediately; it is the only means of keeping him still. Do let me take him."

The child roared, uttering shrill screams, which pierced the thickest walls and could be heard by passers-by in the streets.

In his consternation the Captain got up, and Matilda jumped out and took the child into her bed, when he was quiet at once.

Etienne sat astride on a chair, and made a cigarette, and in about five minutes Andrew went to sleep again.

"I will take him back," his mother said; and she took him back very carefully to his bed.

When she returned, the Captain was waiting for her with open arms, and put his arms round her in a transport of love, while she, embracing him more closely, said, stammering:

"Oh! Etienne, my darling, if you only knew how I love you; how—"

Andrew began to cry again, and he, in a rage, exclaimed:

"Confound it all, won't the little brute be quiet?"

No, the little brute would not be quiet, but howled all the louder, on the contrary.

She thought she heard a noise downstairs; no doubt the nurse was coming, so she jumped up and took the child into bed, and he grew quiet directly.

Three times she put him back, and three times she had to fetch him again, and an hour before daybreak the Captain had to go, swearing like a proverbial trooper; and, to calm his impatience, Matilda promised to receive him again the next night. Of course he came, more impatient and ardent than ever, excited by the delay.

He took care to put his sword carefully into a corner; he took off his boots like a thief, and spoke so low that Matilda could hardly hear him. At last, he was just going to be really happy when the floor, or some piece of furniture, or perhaps the bed itself, creaked; it sounded as if something had broken; and in a moment a cry, feeble at first, but which grew louder every moment, made itself heard. Andrew was awake again.

He yapped like a fox, and there was not the slightest doubt that if he went on like that the whole house would awake; so his mother, not knowing what to do, got up and brought him. The Captain was more furious than ever, but did not move, and very carefully he put out his hand, took a small piece of the child's skin between his two fingers, no matter where it was, the thighs or elsewhere, and pinched it. The little one struggled and screamed in a deafening manner, but his tormentor pinched

everywhere, furiously and more vigorously. He took a morsel of flesh and twisted and turned it, and then let go in order to take hold of another piece, and then another and another.

The child screamed like a chicken having its throat cut, or a dog being mercilessly beaten. His mother caressed him, kissed him, and tried to stifle his cries by her tenderness; but Andrew grew purple, as if he were going into convulsions, and kicked and struggled with his little arms and legs in an alarming manner.

The Captain said, softly:

"Try and take him back to his cradle; perhaps he will be quiet."

And Matilda went into the other room with the child in her arms. As soon as he was out of his mother's bed he cried less loudly, and when he was in his own he was quiet, with the exception of a few broken sobs. The rest of the night was tranquil.

The next night the Captain came again. As he happened to speak rather loudly, Andrew awoke again and began to scream. His mother went and fetched him immediately, but the Captain pinched so hard and long that the child was nearly suffocated by its cries, its eyes turned in its head and it foamed at the mouth. As soon as it was back in its cradle it was quiet, and in four days Andrew did not cry any more to come into his mother's bed.

On Saturday evening the lawyer returned, and took his place again at the domestic hearth and in the conjugal chamber. As he was tired with his journey he went to bed early; but he had not long lain down when he said to his wife:

"Why, how is it that Andrew is not crying? Just go and fetch him, Matilda; I like to feel that he is between us."

She got up and brought the child, but as soon as he saw that he was in that bed, in which he had been so fond of sleeping a few days previous, he wriggled and screamed so violently in his fright that she had to take him back to his cradle.

M. Moreau could not get over his surprise. "What a very funny thing! What is the matter with him this evening? I suppose he is sleepy?"

"He has been like that all the time that you were away; I have never been able to have him in bed with me once."

In the morning the child woke up and began to laugh and play with his toys.

The lawyer, who was an affectionate man, got up, kissed his offspring, and took him into his arms to carry him to their bed. Andrew laughed, with that vacant laugh of little creatures whose ideas are still vague. He suddenly saw the bed and his mother in it, and his happy little face puckered up, till suddenly he began to scream furiously, and struggled as if he were going to be put to the torture.

In his astonishment his father said:

"There must be something the matter with the child," and mechanically he lifted up his little nightshirt.

He uttered a prolonged "O—o—h!" of astonishment. The child's calves, thighs, and buttocks were covered with blue spots as big as half-pennies.

"Just look, Matilda!" the father exclaimed; "this is horrible!" And the mother rushed forward in a fright. It

was horrible; no doubt the beginning of some sort of leprosy, of one of those strange affections of the skin which doctors are often at a loss to account for. The parents looked at one another in consternation.

"We must send for the doctor," the father said.

But Matilda, pale as death, was looking at her child, who was spotted like a leopard. Then suddenly uttering a violent cry as if she had seen something that filled her with horror, she exclaimed:

"Oh! the wretch!"

In his astonishment M. Moreau

asked: "What are you talking about? What wretch?"

She got red up to the roots of her hair, and stammered:

"Oh, nothing! but I think I can guess—it must be—we ought to send for the doctor. It must be that wretch of a nurse who has been pinching the poor child to make him keep quiet when he cries."

In his rage the lawyer sent for the nurse, and very nearly beat her. She denied it most impudently, but was instantly dismissed, and the Municipality having been informed of her conduct, she will find it a hard matter to get another situation.

A Fishing Excursion

PARIS was blockaded, desolate, famished. The sparrows were few, and anything that was to be had was good to eat.

On a bright morning in January, Mr. Morissot, a watchmaker by trade, but idler through circumstances, was walking along the boulevard, sad, hungry, with his hands in the pockets of his uniform trousers, when he came face to face with a brother-in-arms whom he recognized as an old-time friend.

Before the war, Morissot could be seen at daybreak every Sunday, trudging along with a cane in one hand and a tin box on his back. He would take the train to Colombes and walk from there to the Isle of Marante where he would fish until dark.

It was there he had met Mr. Sauvage

who kept a little notion store in the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, a jovial fellow and passionately fond of fishing like himself. A warm friendship had sprung up between these two and they would fish side by side all day, very often without saying a word. Some days, when everything looked fresh and new and the beautiful spring sun gladdened every heart, Mr. Morissot would exclaim:

"How delightful!" and Mr. Sauvage would answer:

"There is nothing to equal it."

Then again on a fall evening, when the glorious setting sun, spreading its golden mantle on the already tinted leaves, would throw strange shadows around the two friends, Sauvage would say:

"What a grand picture!"

"It beats the boulevard!" would answer Morissot. But they understood each other quite as well without speaking.

The two friends had greeted each other warmly and had resumed their walk side by side, both thinking deeply of the past and present events. They entered a *café*, and when a glass of absinthe had been placed before each Sauvage sighed:

"What terrible events, my friend!"

"And what weather!" said Morissot sadly; "this is the first nice day we have had this year. Do you remember our fishing excursions?"

"Do I! Alas! when shall we go again!"

After a second absinthe they emerged from the *café*, feeling rather dizzy—that light-headed effect which alcohol has on an empty stomach. The balmy air had made Sauvage exuberant and he exclaimed:

"Suppose we go!"

"Where?"

"Fishing."

"Fishing! Where?"

"To our old spot, to Colombes. The French soldiers are stationed near there and I know Colonel Dumoulin will give us a pass."

"It's a go; I am with you."

An hour after, having supplied themselves with their fishing tackle, they arrived at the colonel's villa. He had smiled at their request and had given them a pass in due form.

At about eleven o'clock they reached the advance-guard, and after presenting their pass, walked through Colombes and found themselves very near their destination. Argenteuil, across the way, and

the great plains toward Nanterre were all deserted. Solitary the hill of Orge-mont and Sannois rose clearly above the plains; a splendid point of observation.

"See," said Sauvage pointing to the hills, "the Prussians are there."

Prussians! They had never seen one, but they knew that they were all around Paris, invisible and powerful; plundering, devastating, and slaughtering. To their superstitious terror they added a deep hatred for this unknown and victorious people.

"What if we should meet some?" said Morissot.

"We would ask them to join us," said Sauvage in true Parisian style.

Still they hesitated to advance. The silence frightened them. Finally Sauvage picked up courage.

"Come, let us go on cautiously."

They proceeded slowly, hiding behind bushes, looking anxiously on every side, listening to every sound. A bare strip of land had to be crossed before reaching the river. They started to run. At last, they reached the bank and sank into the bushes; breathless, but relieved.

Morissot thought he heard some one walking. He listened attentively, but no, he heard no sound. They were indeed alone! The little island shielded them from view. The house where the restaurant used to be seemed deserted; feeling reassured, they settled themselves for a good day's sport.

Sauvage caught the first fish, Morissot the second; and every minute they would bring one out which they would place in a net at their feet. It was indeed miraculous! They felt that su-

preme joy which one feels after having been deprived for months of a pleasant pastime. They had forgotten everything; even the war!

Suddenly, they heard a rumbling sound and the earth shook beneath them. It was the cannon on Mont Valérien. Morissot looked up and saw a trail of smoke, which was instantly followed by another explosion. Then they followed in quick succession.

"They are at it again," said Sauvage shrugging his shoulders. Morissot, who was naturally peaceful, felt a sudden, uncontrollable anger.

"Stupid fools! What pleasure can they find in killing each other!"

"They are worse than brutes!"

"It will always be thus as long as we have governments."

"Well, such is life!"

"You mean death!" said Morissot laughing.

They continued to discuss the different political problems, while the cannon on Mont Valérien sent death and desolation among the French.

Suddenly they started. They had heard a step behind them. They turned and beheld four big men in dark uniforms, with guns pointed right at them. Their fishing-lines dropped out of their hands and floated away with the current.

In a few minutes, the Prussian soldiers had bound them, cast them into a boat, and rowed across the river to the island which our friends had thought deserted. They soon found out their mistake when they reached the house, behind which stood a score or more of soldiers. A big burly officer, seated astride a chair, smoking

an immense pipe, addressed them in excellent French:

"Well, gentlemen, have you made a good haul?"

Just then, a soldier deposited at his feet the net full of fish which he had taken care to take along with him. The officer smiled and said:

"I see you have done pretty well; but let us change the subject. You are evidently sent to spy upon me. You pretended to fish so as to put me off the scent, but I am not so simple. I have caught you and shall have you shot. I am sorry, but war is war. As you passed the advance-guard you certainly must have the password; give it to me, and I will set you free."

The two friends stood side by side, pale and slightly trembling, but they answered nothing.

"No one will ever know. You will go back home quietly and the secret will disappear with you. If you refuse, it is instant death! Choose!"

They remained motionless; silent. The Prussian officer calmly pointed to the river.

"In five minutes you will be at the bottom of this river! Surely, you have a family, friends waiting for you?"

Still they kept silent. The cannon rumbled incessantly. The officer gave orders in his own tongue, then moved his chair away from the prisoners. A squad of men advanced within twenty feet of them, ready for command.

"I give you one minute; not a second more!"

Suddenly approaching the two Frenchmen, he took Morissot aside and whispered:

"Quick; the password. Your friend

will not know; he will think I changed my mind." Morissot said nothing.

Then taking Sauvage aside he asked him the same thing, but he also was silent. The officer gave further orders and the men leveled their guns. At that moment, Morissot's eyes rested on the net full of fish lying in the grass a few feet away. The sight made him faint and, though he struggled against it, his eyes filled with tears. Then turning to his friend:

"Farewell! Mr. Sauvage!"

"Farewell! Mr. Morissot."

They stood for a minute, hand in hand, trembling with emotion which they were unable to control.

"Fire!" commanded the officer.

The squad of men fired as one. Sauvage fell straight on his face. Morissot, who was taller, swayed, pivoted and fell across his friend's body his face to the sky; while blood flowed freely from the wound in the breast. The officer gave further orders and his men

disappeared. They came back presently with ropes and stones, which they tied to the feet of the two friends, and four of them carried them to the edge of the river. They swung them and threw them in as far as they could. The bodies weighted by stones sank immediately. A splash, a few ripples and the water resumed its usual calmness. The only thing to be seen was a little blood floating on the surface. The officer calmly retraced his steps toward the house muttering:

"The fish will get even now."

He perceived the net full of fish, picked it up, smiled, and called:

"Wilhelm!"

A soldier in a white uniform approached. The officer handed him the fish saying:

"Fry these little things while they are still alive; they will make a delicious meal."

And having resumed his position on the chair, he puffed away at his pipe."

After

"MY DARLINGS," said the Comtesse, "you must go to bed."

The three children, two girls and a boy, rose up to kiss their grandmother.

Then they said "Good night" to M. le Curé, who had dined at the château, as he did every Thursday.

The Abbé Mauduit sat two of the young ones on his knees, passing his long arms clad in black behind the children's necks; and, drawing their heads toward him with a paternal move-

ment, he kissed each of them on the forehead with a long, tender kiss.

Then, he again set them down on the floor, and the little beings went off, the boy in front, and the girls behind.

"You are fond of children, M. le Curé," said the Comtesse.

"Very fond, Madame."

The old woman raised her bright eyes toward the priest.

"And—has your solitude never weighed too heavily on you?"

"Yes, sometimes."

He became silent, hesitated, and then added: "But I was never made for ordinary life."

"What do you know about it?"

"Oh! I know very well. I was made to be a priest; I followed my own path."

The Comtesse kept staring at him:

"Look here, M. le Curé, tell me this—tell me how it was that you resolved to renounce forever what makes us love life—the rest of us—all that consoles and sustains us? What is it that drove you, impelled you, to separate yourself from the great natural path of marriage and the family. You are neither an enthusiast nor a fanatic, neither a gloomy person nor a sad person. Was it some strange occurrence, some sorrow, that led you to take lifelong vows?"

The Abbé Mauduit rose up and drew near to the fire, stretching out to the flames the big shoes that country priests generally wear. He seemed still hesitating as to what reply he should make.

He was a tall old man with white hair, and for the last twenty years had been the pastor of the parish of Sainte-Antoine-du-Rocher. The peasants said of him, "There's a good man for you!" And indeed he was a good man, benevolent, friendly to all, gentle, and, to crown all, generous. Like Saint Martin, he had cut his cloak in two. He freely laughed, and wept too, for very little, just like a woman,—a thing that prejudiced him more or less in the hard minds of the country people.

The old Comtesse de Saville living in retirement in her château of Rocher,

in order to bring up her grandchildren, after successive deaths of her son and her daughter-in-law, was very much attached to the curé, and used to say of him. "He has a kind heart!"

The abbé came every Thursday to spend the evening at the château, and they were close friends, with the open and honest friendship of old people.

She persisted:

"Look here M. le Curé! 'tis your turn now to make a confession!"

He repeated: "I was not made for a life like everybody else. I saw it myself, fortunately, in time, and have had many proofs since that I made no mistake on that point.

"My parents, who were mercers in Vedriers, and rather rich, had much ambition on my account. They sent me to a boarding-school while I was very young. You cannot conceive what a boy may suffer at college, by the mere fact of separation, of isolation. This monotonous life without affection is good for some and detestable for others. Young people often have hearts more sensitive than one supposes, and by shutting them up thus too soon, far from those they love, we may develop to an excessive extent a sensibility which is of an overstrung kind, and which becomes sickly and dangerous.

"I scarcely ever played; I never had companions; I passed my hours in looking back to my home with regret; I spent the whole night weeping in my bed. I sought to bring up before my mind recollections of my own home, trifling recollections of little things, little events. I thought incessantly of all I had left behind there. I became almost imperceptibly an oversensitive

youth, to whom the slightest annoyances were dreadful griefs.

"Together with this, I remained taciturn, self-absorbed, without expansion, without confidants. This work of mental exaltation was brought about obscurely but surely. The nerves of children are quickly excited; one ought to realize the fact that they live in a state of deep quiescence up to the time of almost complete development. But does anyone reflect that, for certain students, an unjust imposition can be as great a pang as the death of a friend afterward? Does anyone realize the fact that certain young souls have, with very little cause, terrible emotions, and are in a very short time diseased and incurable souls?

"This was my case. This faculty of regret developed itself in me in such a fashion that my existence became a martyrdom.

"I did not speak about it; I said nothing about it; but gradually I acquired a sensibility, or rather a sensitivity, so lively that my soul resembled a living wound. Everything that touched it produced in it twitchings of pain, frightful vibrations, and veritable ravages. Happy are the men whom nature has buttressed with indifference and cased in stoicism.

"I reached my sixteenth year. An excessive timidity had come to me from this aptitude to suffer on account of everything. Feeling myself unprotected against all the attacks of chance or fate, I feared every contact, every approach, every event. I lived on the watch as if under the constant threat of an unknown and always expected misfortune. I was afraid either to speak

or to act publicly. I had, indeed, the sensation that life is a battle, a dreadful conflict in which one receives terrible blows, grievous, mortal wounds. In place of cherishing, like all men, the hope of good fortune on the morrow, I only kept a confused fear of it, and I felt in my own mind a desire to conceal myself—to avoid combat in which I should be vanquished and slain.

"As soon as my studies were finished, they gave me six months time to choose a career. Suddenly a very simple event made me see clearly into myself, showed me the diseased condition of my mind, made me understand the danger, and caused me to make up my mind to fly from it.

"Verdiers is a little town surrounded with plains and woods. In the central street stands my parents' house. I now passed my days far from this dwelling which I had so much regretted, so much desired. Dreams were awakened in me, and I walked all alone in the fields in order to let them escape and fly away. My father and my mother quite occupied with business, and anxious about my future, talked to me only about their profits or about my possible plans. They were fond of me in the way that hard-headed, practical people are; they had more reasons than heart in their affection for me. I lived imprisoned in my thoughts, and trembling with eternal uneasiness.

"Now, one evening, after a long walk, as I was making my way home with quick strides so as not to be late, I met a dog trotting toward me. He was a species of red spaniel, very lean, with long curly ears.

"When he was ten paces away from

me, he stopped. I did the same. Then he began wagging his tail, and came over to me with short steps and nervous movements of his whole body, going down on his paws as if appealing to me, and softly shaking his head. He then made a show of crawling with an air so humble, so sad, so suppliant, that I felt the tears coming into my eyes. I came near him; he ran away; then he came back again; and I bent down trying to coax him to approach me with soft words. At last, he was within reach and I gently caressed him with the most careful hands.

"He grew bold, rose up bit by bit, laid his paws on my shoulders, and began to lick my face. He followed me into the house.

"This was really the first being I had passionately loved, because he returned my affection. My attachment to this animal was certainly exaggerated and ridiculous. It seemed to me in a confused sort of way that we were brothers, lost on this earth, and therefore isolated and without defense, one as well as the other. He never quitted my side. He slept at the foot of my bed, ate at my table in spite of the objections of my parents, and followed me in my solitary walks.

"I often stopped at the side of a ditch, and I sat down in the grass. Sam would lie on my knees, and lift up my hand with the end of his nose so that I might caress him.

"One day toward the end of June, as we were on the road from Saint-Pierre-de-Chavrol, I saw the diligence from Pavereau coming along. Its four horses were going at a gallop. It had a yellow box-seat, and imperial crowned

with black leather. The coachman cracked his whip; a cloud of dust rose up under the wheels of the heavy vehicle, then floated behind, just as a cloud would do.

"And, all of a sudden, as the vehicle came close to me, Sam, perhaps frightened by the noise and wishing to join me, jumped in front of it. A horse's foot knocked him down. I saw him rolling over, turning round, falling back again on all fours, and then the entire coach gave two big jolts and behind it I saw something quivering in the dust on the road. He was nearly cut in two; all his intestines were hanging through his stomach, which had been ripped open, and spurts of blood fell to the ground. He tried to get up, to walk, but he could only move his two front paws, and scratch the ground with them, as if to make a hole. The two others were already dead. And he howled dreadfully, mad with pain.

"He died in a few minutes. I cannot describe how much I felt and suffered. I was confined to my own room for a month.

"Now, one night my father, enraged at seeing me in such a state for so little, exclaimed:

"How then will it be when you have real griefs, if you lose your wife or children?"

"And I began to see clearly into myself. I understood why all the small miseries of each day assumed in my eyes the importance of a catastrophe; I saw that I was organized in such a way that I suffered dreadfully from everything, that even painful impression was multiplied by my diseased sensibility, and an atrocious fear of

life took possession of me. I was without passions, without ambitions; I resolved to sacrifice possible joys in order to avoid sorrows. Existence is short, but I made up my mind to spend it in the service of others, in relieving their troubles and enjoying their happiness. By having no direct experience of either one or the other, I would only be conscious of passionless emotions.

"And if you only knew how, in spite of this, misery tortures me, ravages me. But what would be for me an intolerable affliction has become commiseration, pity.

"The sorrows which I have every day to concern myself about I could not endure if they fell on my own heart. I could not have seen one of my children die without dying myself. And I have, in spite of everything, preserved such a deep and penetrating fear of circumstances that the sight of the postman entering my house makes a shiver pass every day through my veins, and yet I have nothing to be afraid of now."

The Abbé Mauduit ceased speaking.

He stared into the fire in the huge grate, as if he saw there mysterious things, all the unknown portions of existence which he would have been able to live if he had been more fearless in the face of suffering.

He added, then, in a subdued tone:

"I was right. I was not made for this world."

The Comtesse said nothing at first; but at length, after a long silence, she remarked:

"For my part, if I had not my grandchildren, I believe I would not have the courage to live."

And the Curé rose up without saying another word.

As the servants were asleep in the kitchen, she conducted him herself to the door which looked out on the garden, and she saw his tall shadow, revealed by the reflection of the lamp, disappearing through the gloom of night.

Then she came back, sat down before the fire, and pondered over many things on which we never think when we are young.

The Spasm

THE hotel-guests slowly entered the dining-room, and sat down in their places. The waiters began to attend on them in a leisurely fashion so as to enable those who were late to arrive, and to avoid bringing back the dishes. The old bathers, the *habitués*, those whose season was advancing, gazed with interest toward the door, whenever it

opened, with a desire to see new faces appearing.

This is the principal distraction of health resorts. People look forward to the dinner hour in order to inspect each day's new arrivals, to find out who they are, what they do, and what they think. A vague longing springs up in the mind, a longing for agreeable meetings, for plea-

sant acquaintances, perhaps for love-adventures. In this life of elbowings, strangers, as well as those with whom we have come into daily contact, assume an extreme importance. Curiosity is aroused, sympathy is ready to exhibit itself, and sociability is the order of the day.

We cherish antipathies for a week and friendships for a month; we see other people with different eyes, when we view them through the medium of the acquaintanceship that is brought about at health-resorts. We discover in men suddenly, after an hour's chat in the evening after dinner, or under the trees in the park where the generous spring bubbles up, a high intelligence and astonishing merits, and, a month afterward, we have completely forgotten these new friends, so fascinating when we first met them.

There also are formed lasting and serious ties more quickly than anywhere else. People see each other every day; they become acquainted very quickly; and with the affection thus originated is mingled something of the sweetness and self-abandonment of long-standing intimacies. We cherish in after years the dear and tender memories of those first hours of friendship, the memory of those first conversations through which we have been able to unveil a soul, of those first glances which interrogate and respond to the questions and secret thoughts which the mouth has not as yet uttered, the memory of that first cordial confidence, the memory of that delightful sensation of opening our hearts to those who are willing to open theirs to us.

And the melancholy of health-resorts, the monotony of days that are alike, help from hour to hour in this rapid development of affection.

* * * * *

Well, this evening, as on every other evening, we awaited the appearance of strange faces.

Only two appeared, but they were very remarkable looking, a man and a woman—father and daughter. They immediately produced the same effect on my mind as some of Edgar Poe's characters; and yet there was about them a charm, the charm associated with misfortune. I looked upon them as the victims of fatality. The man was very tall and thin, rather stooped, with hair perfectly white, too white for his comparatively youthful physiognomy; and there was in his bearing and in his person that austerity peculiar to Protestants. The daughter, who was probably twenty-four or twenty-five, was small in stature, and was also very thin, very pale, and had the air of one worn out with utter lassitude. We meet people like this from time to time, people who seem too weak for the tasks and the needs of daily life, too weak to move about, to walk, to do all that we do every day. This young girl was very pretty, with the diaphanous beauty of a phantom; and she ate with extreme slowness, as if she were almost incapable of moving her arms. It must have been she assuredly who had come to take the waters.

They found themselves facing me at the opposite side of the table; and I at once noticed that the father had a very singular nervous spasm. Every time he wanted to reach an object, his

hand made a hook-like movement, a sort of irregular zigzag, before it succeeded in touching what it was in search of; and, after a little while, this action was so wearisome to me that I turned aside my head in order not to see it. I noticed, too, that the young girl, during meals, wore a glove on her left hand.

After dinner I went for a stroll in the park of the thermal establishment. This led toward the little Auvergnese station of Châtel Guyon, hidden in a gorge at the foot of the high mountain, of that mountain from which flow so many boiling springs, rising from the deep bed of extinct volcanoes. Over there, above us, the domes, which had once been craters, raised their mutilated heads on the summit of the long chain. For Châtel Guyon is situated at the spot where the region of domes begins. Beyond it stretches out the region of peaks, and, further on again, the region of precipices.

The Puy de Dôme is the highest of the domes, the Peak of Sancy is the loftiest of the peaks, and Cantal is the most precipitous of these mountain heights.

This evening it was very warm. I walked up and down a shady path, on the side of the mountain overlooking the park, listening to the opening strains of the Casino band. I saw the father and the daughter advancing slowly in my direction. I saluted them, as we are accustomed to salute our hotel-companions at health-resorts; and the man, coming to a sudden halt, said to me:

"Could you not, Monsieur, point out to us a short walk, nice and easy, if

that is possible, and excuse my intrusion on you?"

I offered to show them the way toward the valley through which the little river flowed, a deep valley forming a gorge between two tall, craggy, wooded slopes. They gladly accepted my offer, and we talked naturally about the virtues of the waters.

"Oh!" he said, "my daughter has a strange malady, the seat of which is unknown. She suffers from incomprehensible nervous disorders. At one time, the doctors think she has an attack of heart disease, at another time, they imagine it is some affection of the liver, and at another time they declare it to be a disease of the spine. To-day, her condition is attributed to the stomach, which is the great caldron and regulator of the body, the Protean source of diseases with a thousand forms and a thousand susceptibilities to attack. This is why we have come here. For my part, I am rather inclined to think it is the nerves, in any case it is very sad."

Immediately the remembrance of the violent spasmodic movement of his hand came back to my mind, and I asked him:

"But is this not the result of heredity? Are not your own nerves somewhat affected?"

"Mine? Oh! no—my nerves have always been very steady."

Then suddenly, after a pause, he went on:

"Ah! You are alluding to the spasm in my hand every time I want to reach for anything? This arises from a terrible experience which I had. Just

imagine! this daughter of mine was actually buried alive!"

I could only give utterance to the word "Ah!" so great were my astonishment and emotion.

* * * * *

He continued:

"Here is the story. It is simple. Juliette had been subject for some time to serious attacks of the heart. We believed that she had disease of that organ and we were prepared for the worst.

"One day, she was carried into the house cold, lifeless, dead. She had fallen down unconscious in the garden. The doctor certified that life was extinct. I watched by her side for a day and two nights. I laid her with my own hands in the coffin, which I accompanied to the cemetery where she was deposited in the family vault. It is situated in the very heart of Lorraine.

"I wished to have her interred with her jewels, bracelets, necklaces, rings, all presents which she had got from me and with her first ball-dress on.

"You may easily imagine the state of mind in which I was when I returned home. She was the only companion I had, for my wife has been dead for many years. I found my way to my own apartment in a half-distracted condition, utterly exhausted, and I sank into my easy-chair, without the capacity to think or the strength to move. I was nothing better now than a suffering, vibrating machine, a human being who had, as it were, been flayed alive; my soul was like a living wound.

"My old valet Prosper, who had assisted me in placing Juliette in her coffin, and preparing her for her last

sleep, entered the room noiselessly, and asked:

"Does Monsieur want anything?"

"I merely shook my head, by way of answering 'No.'

"He urged: 'Monsieur is wrong. He will bring some illness on himself. Would Monsieur like me to put him to bed?'

"I answered: 'No! let me alone!' And he left the room.

"I know not how many hours slipped away. Oh! what a night, what a night! It was cold. My fire had died out in the huge grate; and the wind, the winter wind, an icy wind, a hurricane accompanied by frost and snow, kept blowing against the window with a sinister and regular noise.

"How many hours slipped away? There I was without sleeping, powerless, crushed, my eyes wide open, my legs stretched out, my body limp, inanimate, and my mind torpid with despair. Suddenly, the great bell of the entrance gate, the bell of the vestibule, rang out.

I got such a shock that my chair cracked under me. The solemn ponderous sound vibrated through the empty château as if through a vault. I turned round to see what the hour was by my clock. It was just two in the morning. Who could be coming at such an hour?

"And abruptly the bell again rang twice. The servants, without doubt, were afraid to get up. I took a wax-candle and descended the stairs. I was on the point of asking: 'Who is there?'

"Then, I felt ashamed of my weakness, and I slowly opened the huge door. My heart was throbbing wildly;

I was frightened; I hurriedly drew back the door, and in the darkness, I distinguished a white figure standing erect, something that resembled an apparition.

"I recoiled, petrified with horror, faltering:

"'Who—who—who are you?'

"A voice replied:

"'It is I, father.'

"It was my daughter. I really thought I must be mad, and I retreated backward before this advancing specter. I kept moving away, making a sign with my hand, as if to drive the phantom away, that gesture which you have noticed,—that gesture of which since then I have never got rid.

"The apparition spoke again:

"'Do not be afraid, papa; I was not dead. Somebody tried to steal my rings, and cut one of my fingers, the blood began to flow, and this reanimated me.'

And, in fact, I could see that her hand was covered with blood.

"I fell on my knees, choking with sobs and with a rattling in my throat.

"Then, when I had somewhat collected my thoughts, though I was still so much dismayed that I scarcely realized the gruesome good-fortune that had fallen to my lot, I made her go up to my room, and sit down in my easy-chair; then I rang excitedly for Prosper to get him to light up the fire again and to get her some wine and

summon the rest of the servants to her assistance.

"The man entered, stared at my daughter, opened his mouth with a gasp of alarm and stupefaction, and then fell back insensible.

"It was he who had opened the vault, and who had mutilated and then abandoned my daughter, for he could not efface the traces of the theft. He had not even taken the trouble to put back the coffin into its place, feeling sure, besides, that he would not be suspected by me, as I completely trusted him.

"You see, Monsieur, that we are very unhappy people."

* * * * *

He stopped.

The night had fallen, casting its shadows over the desolate, mournful vale, and a sort of mysterious fear possessed me at finding myself by the side of those strange beings, of this young girl who had come back from the tomb and this father with his uncanny spasm.

I found it impossible to make any comment on this dreadful story. I only murmured:

"What a horrible thing!"

Then, after a minute's silence, I added:

"Suppose we go back, I think it is getting cold."

And we made our way back to the hotel.

A Meeting

IT WAS all an accident, a pure accident. Tired of standing, Baron d'Et-raille went—as all the Princess's rooms were open on that particular evening—into an empty bedroom, which appeared almost dark after coming out of the brilliantly-lighted drawing-rooms.

He looked round for a chair in which to have a doze, as he was sure his wife would not go away before daylight. As soon as he got inside the door he saw the big bed with its azure-and-gold hangings, in the middle of the great room, looking like a catafalque in which love was buried, for the Princess was no longer young. Behind it, a large bright spot looked like a lake seen at a distance from a window. It was a big looking-glass, which, discreetly covered with dark drapery very rarely let down, seemed to look at the bed, which was its accomplice. One might almost fancy that it felt regrets, and that one was going to see in it charming shapes of nude women and the gentle movement of arms about to embrace them.

The Baron stood still for a moment, smiling and rather moved, on the threshold of this chamber dedicated to love. But suddenly something appeared in the looking-glass, as if the phantoms which he had evoked had come up before him. A man and a woman who had been sitting on a low couch hidden in the shade had risen, and the polished surface, reflecting their figures, showed that they were kissing each other before separating.

The Baron recognized his wife and

the Marquis de Cervigné. He turned and went away like a man fully master of himself, and waited till it was day before taking away the Baroness. But he had no longer any thoughts of sleeping.

As soon as they were alone, he said:

“Madame, I saw you just now in the Princess de Raynes's room. I need say no more, for I am not fond either of reproaches, acts of violence, or of ridicule. As I wish to avoid all such things, we shall separate without any scandal. Our lawyers will settle your position according to my orders. You will be free to live as you please when you are no longer under my roof; but, as you will continue to bear my name, I must warn you that should any scandal arise, I shall show myself inflexible.

She tried to speak, but he stopped her, bowed, and left the room.

He was more astonished and sad than unhappy. He had loved her dearly during the first period of their married life; but his ardor had cooled, and now he often had a caprice, either in a theater or in society, though he always preserved a certain liking for the Baroness.

She was very young, hardly four-and-twenty, small, slight,—too slight,—and very fair. She was a true Parisian doll: clever, spoiled, elegant, coquettish, witty, with more charm than real beauty. He used to say familiarly to his brother, when speaking of her:

“My wife is charming, attractive, but—there is nothing to lay hold of. She is like a glass of champagne that

is all froth—when you have got to the wine it is very good, but there it too little of it, unfortunately.”

He walked up and down the room in great agitation, thinking of a thousand things. At one moment he felt in a great rage and felt inclined to give the Marquis a good thrashing, to horse-whip him publicly in the club. But he thought that would not do, it would not be the thing; *he* would be laughed at, and not the other, and he felt that his anger proceeded more from wounded vanity than from a broken heart. So he went to bed, but could not get to sleep.

A few days afterward it was known in Paris that the Baron and Baroness d'Etraille had agreed to an amicable separation on account of incompatibility of temper. Nobody suspected anything, nobody laughed, and nobody was astonished.

The Baron, however, to avoid meeting her, traveled for a year; then he spent the summer at the seaside and the autumn in shooting, returning to Paris for the winter. He did not meet his wife once.

He did not even know what people said about her. At any rate, she took care to save appearances, and that was all he asked for.

He got dreadfully bored, traveled again, restored his old castle of Villebosc—which took him two years; then for over a year he received relays of friends there, till at last, tired of all these commonplace, so-called pleasures, he returned to his mansion in the Rue de Lills, just six years after their separation.

He was then forty-five, with a good

crop of gray hair, rather stout, and with that melancholy look of people who have been handsome, sought after, much liked, and are deteriorating daily.

A month after his return to Paris he took cold on coming out of his club, and had a bad cough, so his medical man ordered him to Nice for the rest of the winter.

He started by the express on Monday evening. He was late, got to the station only a very short time before the departure of the train, and had barely time to get into a carriage, with only one other occupant, who was sitting in a corner so wrapped in furs and cloaks that he could not even make out whether it were a man or a woman, as nothing of the figure could be seen. When he perceived that he could not find out, he put on his traveling-cap, rolled himself up in his rugs, and stretched himself out comfortably to sleep.

He did not wake up till the day was breaking, and looked immediately at his fellow-traveler. He had not stirred all night, and seemed still to be sound asleep.

M. d'Etraille made use of the opportunity to brush his hair and his beard, and to try and freshen himself up a little generally, for a night's traveling changes one's looks very much when one has attained a certain age.

A great poet has said:

“When we are young, our mornings are triumphant!”

Then we wake up with a cool skin, a bright eye, and glossy hair. When one grows old one wakes up in a different

state. Dull eyes, red, swollen cheeks, dry lips, the hair and beard all disarranged, impart an old, fatigued, worn-out look to the face.

The Baron opened his traveling dressing-case, made himself as tidy as he could, and then waited.

The engine whistled and the train stopped, and his neighbor moved. No doubt he was awake. They started off again, and then an oblique ray of the sun shone into the carriage just on to the sleeper, who moved again, shook himself, and then calmly showed his face.

It was a young, fair, pretty, stout woman, and the Baron looked at her in amazement. He did not know what to believe. He could have sworn that it was his wife—but wonderfully changed for the better: stouter—why, she had grown as stout as he was—only it suited her much better than it did him.

She looked at him quietly, did not seem to recognize him, and then slowly laid aside her wraps. She had that calm assurance of a woman who is sure of herself, the insolent audacity of a first awaking, knowing and feeling that she was in her full beauty and freshness.

The Baron really lost his head. Was it his wife, or somebody else who was as like her as any sister could be? As he had not seen her for six years he might be mistaken.

She yawned, and he knew her by the gesture. She turned and looked at him again, calmly, indifferently, as if she scarcely saw him, and then looked out at the country again.

He was upset and dreadfully per-

plexed and waited, looking at her sideways, steadfastly.

Yes; it was certainly his wife. How could he possibly have doubted? There could certainly not be two noses like that, and a thousand recollections flashed through him, slight details of her body, a beauty-spot on one of her limbs and another on her back. How often he had kissed them! He felt the old feeling of the intoxication of love stealing over him, and he called to mind the sweet odor of her skin, her smile when she put her arms on to his shoulders, the soft intonations of her voice, all her graceful, coaxing ways.

But how she had changed and improved! It was she and yet not she. He thought her riper, more developed, more of a woman, more seductive, more desirable, adorably desirable.

And this strange, unknown woman, whom he had accidentally met in a railway-carriage belonged to him; he had only to say to her:

“I insist upon it.”

He had formerly slept in her arms, existed only in her love, and now he had found her again certainly, but so changed that he scarcely knew her. It was another, and yet she at the same time. It was another who had been born, formed, and grown since he had left her. It was she, indeed; she whom he had possessed but who was now altered, with a more assured smile and greater self-possession. There were two women in one, mingling a great deal of what was new and unknown with many sweet recollections of the past. There was something singular, disturbing, exciting about it—a kind of

mystery of love in which there floated a delicious confusion. It was his wife in a new body and in new flesh which his lips had never pressed.

And he remembered that in six or seven years everything changes in us, only outlines can be recognized, and sometimes even they disappear.

The blood, the hair, the skin, all change and are reconstituted and when people have not seen each other for a long time they find when they meet, another totally different being, although it be the same and bear the same name.

And the heart also can change. Ideas may be modified and renewed, so that in forty years of life we may, by gradual and constant transformations, become four or five totally new and different beings.

He dwelt on this thought till it troubled him; it had first taken possession of him when he surprised her in the Princess's room. He was not the least angry; it was not the same woman that he was looking at—that thin, excitable doll of those days.

What was he to do? How should he address her? and what could he say to her? Had she recognized him?

The train stopped again. He got up, bowed, and said: "Bertha, do you want anything I can bring you?"

She looked at him from head to foot, and answered, without showing the slightest surprise or confusion or anger, but with the most perfect indifference:

"I do not want anything—thank you."

He got out and walked up and down the platform in order to think, and, as it were, to recover his senses after a fall. What should he do now? If he

got into another carriage it would look as if he were running away. Should he be polite or importunate? That would look as if he were asking for forgiveness. Should he speak as if he were her master? He would look like a fool, and besides, he really had no right to do so.

He got in again and took his place.

During his absence she had hastily arranged her dress and hair, and was now lying stretched out on the seat, radiant, but without showing any emotion.

He turned to her, and said: "My dear Bertha, since this singular chance has brought us together after a separation of six years—a quite friendly separation—are we to continue to look upon each other as irreconcilable enemies? We are shut up together, *tête-à-tête*, which is so much the better or so much the worse. I am not going to get into another carriage, so don't you think it is preferable to talk as friends till the end of our journey?"

She answered quite calmly again:

"Just as you please."

Then he suddenly stopped, really not knowing what to say; but as he had plenty of assurance, he sat down on the middle seat, and said:

"Well, I see I must pay my court to you; so much the better. It is, however, really a pleasure, for you are charming. You cannot imagine how you have improved in the last six years. I do not know any woman who could give me that delightful sensation which I experienced just now when you emerged from your wraps. I should really have thought such a change impossible."

Without moving her head or looking at him she said: "I cannot say the same with regard to you; you have certainly deteriorated a great deal."

He got red and confused, and then, with a smile of resignation, he said:

"You are rather hard."

"Why?" was her reply. "I am only stating facts. I don't suppose you intend to offer me your love? It must, therefore, be a matter of perfect indifference to you what I think about you. But I see it is a painful subject, so let us talk of something else. What have you been doing since I last saw you?"

He felt rather out of countenance, and stammered:

"I? I have traveled, shot, and grown old, as you see. And you?"

She said, quite calmly: "I have taken care of appearances as you ordered me."

He was very nearly saying something brutal, but he checked himself, and kissed his wife's hand:

"And I thank you," he said.

She was surprised. He was indeed strong and always master of himself.

He went on: "As you have acceded to my first request, shall we now talk without any bitterness?"

She made a little movement of surprise.

"Bitterness! I don't feel any; you are a complete stranger to me; I am only trying to keep up a difficult conversation."

He was still looking at her, carried away in spite of her harshness, and he felt seized with a brutal desire, the desire of the master.

Perceiving that she had hurt his feelings, she said:

"How old are you now? I thought you were younger than you look."

He grew pale:

"I am forty-five;" and then he added: "I forgot to ask after Princess de Raynes. Are you still intimate with her?"

She looked at him as if she hated him:

"Yes, certainly I am. She is very well, thank you."

They remained sitting side by side, agitated and irritated. Suddenly he said:

"My dear Bertha, I have changed my mind. You are my wife, and I expect you to come with me to-day. You have, I think, improved both morally and physically, and I am going to take you back again. I am your husband and it is my right to do so."

She was stupefied, and looked at him, trying to divine his thoughts; but his face was resolute and impenetrable.

"I am very sorry," she said, "but I have made other engagements."

"So much the worse for you," was his reply. "The law gives me the power, and I mean to use it."

They were getting to Marseilles, and the train whistled and slackened speed. The Baroness got up, carefully rolled up her wraps, and then turning to her husband, she said:

"My dear Raymond, do not make a bad use of the *tête-à-tête* which I had carefully prepared. I wished to take precautions, according to your advice, so that I might have nothing to fear from you or from other people, what-

ever might happen. You are going to Nice, are you not?"

"I shall go wherever you go."

"Not at all; just listen to me, and I am sure that you will leave me in peace. In a few moments, when we get to the station, you will see the Princess de Raynes and Countess Hermit waiting for me with their husbands. I wished them to see us, and to know that we spent the night together in the railway-carriage. Don't be alarmed; they will tell it everywhere as a most surprising fact.

"I told you just now that I had carefully followed your advice and saved appearances. Anything else does not matter, does it? Well, in order to do so, I wished to be seen with you. You told me carefully to avoid any scandal, and I am avoiding it, for, I am afraid—I am afraid—"

She waited till the train had quite stopped, and as her friends ran up to open the carriage door, she said:

"I am afraid that I am *enceinte*."

The Princess stretched out her arms to embrace her, and the Baroness said, pointing to the Baron, who was dumb with astonishment, and trying to get at the truth:

"You do not recognize Raymond? He has certainly changed a good deal and he agreed to come with me so that I might not travel alone. We take little trips like this occasionally, like good friends who cannot live together. We are going to separate here; he has had enough of me already."

She put out her hand, which he took mechanically, and then she jumped out on to the platform among her friends, who were waiting for her.

The Baron hastily shut the carriage door, for he was too much disturbed to say a word or come to any determination. He heard his wife's voice, and their merry laughter as they went away.

He never saw her again, nor did he ever discover whether she had told him a lie or was speaking the truth.

A New Year's Gift

JACQUES DE RANDAL, having dined at home alone, told his valet he might go, and then sat down at a table to write his letters.

He finished out every year by writing and dreaming, making for himself a sort of review of things that had happened since last New Year's Day, things that were now all over and dead; and, in proportion as the faces of his friends rose up before his eyes, he wrote them

a few lines, a cordial "Good morning" on the first of January.

So he sat down, opened a drawer, took out of it a woman's photograph, gazed at it a few moments, and kissed it. Then, having laid it beside a sheet of note-paper, he began:

"MY DEAR IRÈNE: You must have by this time the little souvenir which I sent you. I have shut myself up this evening in order to tell you—"

The pen here ceased to move. Jacques rose up and began walking up and down the room.

For the last six months he had a mistress, not a mistress like the others, a woman with whom one engages in a passing intrigue, of the theatrical world or the *demi-monde*, but a woman whom he loved and won. He was no longer a young man, although still comparatively young, and he looked on life seriously in a positive and practical spirit.

Accordingly, he drew up the balance-sheet of his passion, as he drew up every year the balance-sheet of friendships that were ended or freshly contracted, of circumstances and persons that had entered his life. His first ardor of love having grown calmer, he asked himself, with the precision of a merchant making a calculation, what was the state of his heart with regard to her, and he tried to form an idea of what it would be in the future. He found there a great and deep affection, made up of tenderness, gratitude, and the thousand subtleties which give birth to long and powerful attachments.

A ring of the bell made him start. He hesitated. Should he open? But he deemed it was his duty to open, on this New Year's night, to the Unknown who knocks while passing, no matter whom it may be.

So he took a wax-candle, passed through the ante-chamber, removed the bolts, turned the key, drew the door back, and saw his mistress standing pale as a corpse leaning against the wall.

He stammered: "What is the matter with you?"

She replied: "Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Without servants?"

"Yes."

"You are not going out?"

"No."

She entered with the air of a woman who knew the house. As soon as she was in the drawing-room, she sank into the sofa, and, covering her face with her hands, began to weep dreadfully.

He kneeled down at her feet, seized hold of her hands to remove them from her eyes, so that he might look at them, and exclaimed:

"Irène, Irène, what is the matter with you? I implore of you to tell me what is the matter with you?"

Then in the midst of her sobs she murmured: "I can no longer live like this."

He did not understand.

"Like this? What do you mean?"

"Yes. I can no longer live like this. I have endured so much. He struck me this afternoon."

"Who—your husband?"

"Yes—my husband."

"Ha!"

He was astonished, having never suspected that her husband could be brutal. He was a man of the world, of the better class, a clubman, a lover of horses, a theater-goer and an expert swordsman; he was known, talked about, appreciated everywhere, having very courteous manners but a very mediocre intellect, an absence of education and of the real culture needed in order to think like all well-bred people, and finally a respect for all conventional prejudices.

He appeared to devote himself to his wife, as a man ought to do in the case

of wealthy and well-bred people. He displayed enough anxiety about her wishes, her health, her dresses, and, beyond that, left her perfectly free.

Randal, having become Irène's friend, had a right to the affectionate hand-clasp which every husband endowed with good manners owes to his wife's intimate acquaintances. Then, when Jacques, after having been for some time the friend, became the lover, his relations with the husband were more cordial.

Jacques had never dreamed that there were storms in this household, and he was scared at this unexpected revelation.

He asked.

"How did it happen? Tell me."

Thereupon she related a long history, the entire history of her life, since the day of her marriage—the first discussion arising out of a mere nothing, then accentuating itself in the estrangement which grows up each day between two opposite types of character.

Then came quarrels, a complete separation, not apparent, but real; next, her husband showed himself aggressive, suspicious, violent. Now, he was jealous, jealous of Jacques, and this day even, after a scene, he had struck her.

She added with decision: "I will not go back to him. Do with me what you like."

Jacques sat down opposite to her, their knees touching each other. He caught hold of her hands:

"My dear love, you are going to commit a gross, an irreparable folly. If you want to quit your husband, put wrongs on one side, so that your situation as a woman of the world may be saved."

She asked, as she cast at him a restless glance:

"Then, what do you advise me?"

"To go back home, and to put up with your life there till the day when you can obtain either a separation or a divorce, with the honors of war."

"Is not this thing which you advise me to do a little cowardly?"

"No; it is wise and reasonable. You have a high position, a reputation to safeguard, friends to preserve, and relations to deal with. You must not lose all these through a mere caprice."

She rose up, and said with violence:

"Well, no! I cannot have any more of it! It is at an end! it is at an end!"

Then, placing her two hands on her lover's shoulders and looking at him straight in the face, she asked:

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes."

"Then keep me!"

He exclaimed:

"Keep you? In my own house? Here? Why, you are mad. It would mean losing you forever; losing you beyond hope of recall! You are mad!"

She replied, slowly and seriously, like a woman who feels the weight of her words:

"Listen, Jacques. He has forbidden me to see you again, and I will not play this comedy of coming secretly to your house. You must either lose me or take me."

"My dear Irène, in that case, obtain your divorce, and I will marry you."

"Yes, you will marry me in—two years at the soonest. Yours is a patient love."

"Look here! Reflect! If you remain here, he'll come to-morrow to take you away, seeing that he is your husband, seeing that he has right and law on his side."

"I did not ask you to keep me in your own house, Jacques, but to take me anywhere you like. I thought you loved me enough to do that. I have made a mistake. Good-bye!"

She turned round, and went toward the door so quickly that he was only able to catch hold of her when she was outside the room.

"Listen, Irène."

She struggled, and did not want to listen to him any longer, her eyes full of tears, and with these words only on her lips:

"Let me alone! let me alone! let me alone!"

He made her sit down by force, and falling once more on his knees at her feet, he now brought forward a number of arguments and counsels to make her understand the folly and terrible risk of her project. He omitted nothing which he deemed it necessary to say to convince her, finding in his very affection for her strong motives of persuasion.

As she remained silent and cold, he begged of her, implored of her to listen to him, to trust him, to follow his advice.

When he had finished speaking, she only replied:

"Are you disposed to let me go away now? Take away your hands, so that I may rise up."

"Look here, Irène."

"Will you let go?"

"Irène—is your resolution irrevocable?"

"Do let me go."

"Tell me only whether this resolution, this foolish resolution of yours, which you will bitterly regret, is irrevocable?"

"Yes: let me go!"

"Then stay. You know well that you are at home here. We shall go away to-morrow morning."

She rose up, in spite of him, and said in a hard tone:

"No. It is too late. I do not want sacrifice; I want devotion."

"Stay! I have done what I ought to do; I have said what I ought to say. I have no further responsibility on your behalf. My conscience is at peace. Tell me what you want me to do, and I will obey."

She resumed her seat, looked at him for a long time, and then asked, in a very calm voice:

"Explain, then."

"How is that? What do you wish me to explain?"

"Everything—everything that you have thought about before coming to this resolution. Then I will see what I ought to do."

"But I have thought about nothing at all. I ought to warn you that you are going to accomplish an act of folly. You persist; then I ask to share in this act of folly, and I even insist on it."

"It is not natural to change one's opinion so quickly."

"Listen, my dear love. It is not a question here of sacrifice or devotion. On the day when I realized that I loved you, I said this to myself, which every lover ought to say to himself in the

same case: 'The man who loves a woman, who makes an effort to win her, who gets her and who takes her contracts so far as he is himself and so far as she is concerned, a sacred engagement.' It is, mark you, a question of dealing with a woman like you, and not with a woman of an impulsive and yielding disposition.

"Marriage, which has a great social value, a great legal value, possesses in my eyes only a very slight moral value, taking into account the conditions under which it generally takes place.

"Therefore, when a woman, united by this lawful bond, but having no attachment to a husband whom she cannot love, a woman whose heart is free, meets a man for whom she cares, and gives herself to him, when a man who has no other tie takes a woman in this way, I say that they pledge themselves toward each other by this mutual and free agreement much more than by the 'Yes' uttered in the presence of the Mayor.

"I say that, if they are both honorable persons, their union must be more intimate, more real, more healthy than if all the sacraments had consecrated it.

"This woman risks everything. And it is exactly because she knows it, be-

cause she gives everything, her heart, her body, her soul, her honor, her life, because she has foreseen all miseries, all dangers, all catastrophes, because she dares to do a bold act, an intrepid act, because she is prepared, determined to brave everything—her husband who might kill her, and society which may cast her out. This is why she is heroic in her conjugal infidelity; this is why her lover in taking her must also have foreseen everything, and preferred her to everything, whatever might happen. I have nothing more to say. I spoke in the beginning like a man of sense whose duty it was to warn you; and now there is left in me only one man—the man who loves you. Say, then, what I am to do!"

Radiant, she closed his mouth with her lips, and said to him in a low tone:

"It is not true, darling! There is nothing the matter! My husband does not suspect anything. But I wanted to see, I wanted to know, what you would do. I wished for a New Year's gift—the gift of your heart—another gift besides the necklace you have just sent me. You have given it to me. Thanks! thanks! God be thanked for the happiness you have given me!"

My Uncle Sosthenes

MY UNCLE SOSTHENES was a Free-thinker, like many others are, from pure stupidity, people are very often religious in the same way. The mere sight of a priest threw him into a violent rage; he would shake his fist and gri-

mace at him, and touch a piece of iron when the priest's back was turned, forgetting that the latter action showed a belief after all, the belief in the evil eye.

Now when beliefs are unreasonable

one should have all or none at all. I myself am a Freethinker; I revolt at all the dogmas which have invented the fear of death, but I feel no anger toward places of worship, be they Catholic Apostolic, Roman, Protestant, Greek, Russian, Buddhist, Jewish, or Moham-medan. I have a peculiar manner of looking at them and explaining them. A place of worship represents the homage paid by man to "The Unknown." The more extended our thoughts and our views become the more The Unknown diminishes, and the more places of worship will decay. I, however, in the place of church furniture, in the place of pulpits, reading desks, altars, and so on, would fit them up with telescopes, microscopes, and electrical machines; that is all.

My uncle and I differed on nearly every point. He was a patriot, while I was not—for after all patriotism is a kind of religion; it is the egg from which wars are hatched.

My uncle was a Freemason, and I used to declare that they are stupider than old women devotees. That is my opinion, and I maintain it; if we must have any religion at all the old one is good enough for me.

What is their object? Mutual help to be obtained by tickling the palms of each other's hands. I see no harm in it, for they put into practice the Christian precept: "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." The only difference consists in the tickling, but it does not seem worth while to make such a fuss about lending a poor devil half-a-crown.

To all my arguments my uncle's reply used to be:

"We are raising up a religion against a religion; Freethought will kill clericalism. Freemasonry is the headquarters of those who are demolishing all deities."

"Very well, my dear uncle," I would reply (in my heart I felt inclined to say, "You old idiot!"); "it is just that which I am blaming you for. Instead of destroying, you are organizing competition; it is only a case of lowering the prices. And then, if you only admitted Freethinkers among you I could understand it, but you admit anybody. You have a number of Catholics among you, even the leaders of the party. Pius IX. is said to have been one of you before he became Pope. If you call a society with such an organization a bulwark against clericalism, I think it is an extremely weak one."

"My dear boy," my uncle would reply, with a wink, "our most formidable actions are political; slowly and surely we are everywhere undermining the monarchical spirit."

Then I broke out: "Yes, you are very clever! If you tell me that Freemasonry is an election-machine, I will grant it you. I will never deny that it is used as a machine to control candidates of all shades; if you say that it is only used to hoodwink people, to drill them to go to the voting-urn as soldiers are sent under fire, I agree with you; if you declare that it is indispensable to all political ambitions because it changes all its members into electoral agents, I should say to you, 'That is as clear as the sun.' But when you tell me that it serves to undermine the monarchical spirit, I can only laugh in your face.

"Just consider that vast and democratic association which had Prince Napoleon for its Grand Master under the Empire; which has the Crown Prince for its Grand Master in Germany, the Czar's brother in Russia, and to which the Prince of Wales and King Humbert and nearly all the royalists of the globe belong."

"You are quite right," my uncle said; "but all these persons are serving our projects without guessing it."

I felt inclined to tell him he was talking a pack of nonsense.

It was, however, indeed a sight to see my uncle when he had a Freemason to dinner.

On meeting they shook hands in a manner that was irresistibly funny; one could see that they were going through a series of secret mysterious pressures. When I wished to put my uncle in a rage, I had only to tell him that dogs also have a manner which savors very much of Freemasonry, when they greet one another on meeting.

Then my uncle would take his friend into a corner to tell him something important, and at dinner they had a peculiar way of looking at each other, and of drinking to each other, in a manner as if to say: "We know all about it, don't we?"

And to think that there are millions on the face of the globe who are amused at such monkey tricks! I would sooner be a Jesuit.

Now in our town there really was an old Jesuit who was my uncle's detestation. Every time he met him, or if he only saw him at a distance, he used to say: "Go on, you toad!" And then, taking my arm, he would whisper to me:

"Look here, that fellow will play me a trick some day or other, I feel sure of it."

My uncle spoke quite truly, and this was how it happened, through my fault also.

It was close on Holy Week, and my uncle made up his mind to give a dinner on Good Friday, a real dinner with his favorite chitterlings and black puddings. I resisted as much as I could, and said:

"I shall eat meat on that day, but at home, quite by myself. Your *manifestation*, as you call it, is an idiotic idea. Why should you manifest? What does it matter to you if people do not eat any meat?"

But my uncle would not be persuaded. He asked three of his friends to dine with him at one of the best restaurants in the town, and as he was going to pay the bill, I had certainly, after all, no scruples about *manifesting*.

At four o'clock we took a conspicuous place in the most frequented restaurant in the town, and my uncle ordered dinner in a loud voice, for six o'clock.

We sat down punctually, and at ten o'clock we had not finished. Five of us had drunk eighteen bottles of fine still wines, and four of champagne. Then my uncle proposed what he was in the habit of calling: "The archbishop's feat." Each man put six small glasses in front of him, each of them filled with a different liqueur, and then they had all to be emptied at one gulp, one after another, while one of the waiters counted twenty. It was very stupid, but my uncle thought it was very suitable to the occasion.

At eleven o'clock he was dead drunk. So we had to take him home in a cab

and put him to bed, and one could easily foresee that his anti-clerical demonstration would end in a terrible fit of indigestion.

As I was going back to my lodgings, being rather drunk myself, with a cheerful Machiavelian drunkenness which quite satisfied all my instincts of scepticism, an idea struck me.

I arranged my necktie, put on a look of great distress, and went and rang loudly at the old Jesuit's door. As he was deaf he made me wait a longish while, but at length he appeared at his window in a cotton nightcap and asked what I wanted.

I shouted out at the top of my voice:

"Make haste, reverend Sir, and open the door; a poor, despairing, sick man is in need of your spiritual ministrations."

The good, kind man put on his trousers as quickly as he could and came down without his cassock. I told him in a breathless voice that my uncle, the Freethinker, had been taken suddenly ill. Fearing it was going to be something serious he had been seized with a sudden fear of death, and wished to see a priest and talk to him; to have his advice and comfort, to make up with the Church, and to confess, so as to be able to cross the dreaded threshold at peace with himself; and I added in a mocking tone:

"At any rate, he wishes it, and if it does him no good it can do him no harm."

The old Jesuit, who was startled, delighted, and almost trembling, said to me:

"Wait a moment, my son, I will come with you."

But I replied: "Pardon me, reverend Father, if I do not go with you; but my convictions will not allow me to do so. I even refused to come and fetch you, so I beg you not to say that you have seen me, but to declare that you had a presentiment—a sort of revelation of his illness."

The priest consented, and went off quickly, knocked at my uncle's door, was soon let in, and I saw the black cassock disappear within that stronghold of Freethought.

I hid under a neighboring gateway to wait for events. Had he been well, my uncle would have half murdered the Jesuit, but I know that he would scarcely be able to move an arm, and I asked myself, gleefully, what sort of a scene would take place between these antagonists—what explanation would be given, and what would be the issue of this situation, which my uncle's indignation would render more tragic still?

I laughed till I had to hold my sides, and said to myself, half aloud: "Oh! what a joke, what a joke!"

Meanwhile it was getting very cold. I noticed that the Jesuit stayed a long time, and thought: "They are having an explanation, I suppose."

One, two, three hours passed, and still the reverend Father did not come out. What had happened? Had my uncle died in a fit when he saw him, or had he killed the cassocked gentleman? Perhaps they had mutually devoured each other? This last supposition appeared very unlikely, for I fancied that my uncle was quite incapable of swallowing a grain more nourishment at that moment.

At last the day broke. I was very

uneasy, and, not venturing to go into the house myself, I went to one of my friends who lived opposite. I roused him, explained matters to him, much to his amusement and astonishment, and took possession of his window.

At nine o'clock he relieved me and I got a little sleep. At two o'clock I, in my turn, replaced him. We were utterly astonished.

At six o'clock the Jesuit left, with a very happy and satisfied look on his face, and we saw him go away with a quiet step.

Then, timid and ashamed, I went and knocked at my uncle's door. When the servant opened it I did not dare to ask her any questions, but went upstairs without saying a word.

My uncle was lying pale, exhausted, with weary, sorrowful eyes and heavy arms, on his bed. A little religious picture was fastened to one of the bed-curtains with a pin.

"Why, uncle," I said, "you in bed still? Are you not well?"

He replied in a feeble voice:

"Oh! my dear boy, I have been very ill; nearly dead."

"How was that, uncle?"

"I don't know; it was most surprising. But what is stranger still is, that the Jesuit priest who has just left—you know, that excellent man whom I have made such fun of—had a divine revelation of my state, and came to see me."

I was seized with an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh, and with difficulty said: "Oh, really!"

"Yes, he came. He heard a Voice telling him to get up and come to me, because I was going to die. It was a revelation."

I pretended to sneeze, so as not to burst out laughing; I felt inclined to roll on the ground with amusement.

In about a minute I managed to say, indignantly: "And you received him, uncle, you? You, a Freethinker, a Freemason? You did not have him thrown out-of-doors?"

He seemed confused, and stammered:

"Listen a moment, it is so astonishing—so astonishing and providential! He also spoke to me about my father; it seems he knew him formerly."

"Your father, uncle? But that is no reason for receiving a Jesuit."

"I know that, but I was very ill, and he looked after me most devotedly all night long. He was perfect; no doubt he saved my life; those men are all more or less doctors."

"Oh! he looked after you all night? But you said just now that he had only been gone a very short time."

"That is quite true; I kept him to breakfast after all his kindness. He had it at a table by my bedside while I drank a cup of tea."

"And he ate meat?"

My uncle looked vexed, as if I had said something very much out of place, and then added:

"Don't joke, Gaston; such things are out of place at times. He has shown me more devotion than many a relation would have done and I expect to have his convictions respected."

This rather upset me, but I answered, nevertheless: "Very well, uncle; and what did you do after breakfast?"

"We played a game of *béziq*ue, and then he repeated his breviary while I read a little book which he happened to

have in his pocket, and which was not by any means badly written."

"A religious book, uncle?"

"Yes, and no, or rather—no. It is the history of their missions in Central Africa, and is rather a book of travels and adventures. What these men have done is very grand."

I began to feel that matters were going badly, so I got up. "Well, good-bye, uncle," I said, "I see you are going to leave Freemasonry for religion; you are a renegade."

He was still rather confused and stammered:

"Well, but religion is a sort of Freemasonry."

"When is your Jesuit coming back?" I asked.

"I don't—I don't know exactly; tomorrow, perhaps; but it is not certain."

I went out, altogether overwhelmed. My joke turned out very badly for me! My uncle became radically converted, and if that had been all I should not have cared so much. Clerical or Freemason, to me it is all the same; six of one and half-a-dozen of the other; but the worst of it is that he has just made his will—yes, made his will—and has disinherited me in favor of that rascally Jesuit!

All Over

THE Comte de Lormerin had just finished dressing himself. He cast a parting glance at the large glass, which occupied an entire panel of his dressing-room, and smiled.

He was really a fine-looking man still, though he was quite gray. Tall, slight, elegant, with no projecting paunch, with a scanty mustache of doubtful shade on his thin face which seemed fair rather than white, he had presence, that "chic," in short, that indescribable something which establishes between two men more difference than millions of dollars.

He murmured: "Lormerin is still alive!"

And he made his way into the drawing-room, where his correspondence awaited him.

On his table, where everything had its

place, the work-table of the gentleman who never works, there were a dozen letters lying beside three newspapers of different opinions. With a single touch of the finger he exposed to view all these letters, like a gambler giving the choice of a card; and he scanned the handwriting—a thing he did each morning before tearing open the envelopes.

It was for him a moment of delightful expectancy, of inquiry, and vague anxiety. What did these sealed mysterious papers bring him? What did they contain of pleasure, of happiness, or of grief? He surveyed them with a rapid sweep of the eye, recognizing in each case the hand that wrote them, selecting them, making two or three lots, according to what he expected from them. Here, friends; there, persons to whom

he was indifferent; further on, strangers. The last kind always gave him a little uneasiness. What did they want from him? What hand had traced those curious characters full of thoughts, promises, or threats?

This day, one letter in particular caught his eye. It was simple nevertheless, without seeming to reveal anything; but he regarded it with disquietude, with a sort of internal shiver.

He thought: "From whom can it be? I certainly know this writing, and yet I can't identify it."

He raised it to a level with his face, holding it delicately between two fingers, striving to read through the envelope without making up his mind to open it.

Then he smelled it, and snatched up from the table a little magnifying glass which he used in studying all the niceties of handwriting. He suddenly felt unnerved. "Whom is it from? This hand is familiar to me, very familiar. I must have often read its prosings, yes, very often. But this must have been a long, long time ago. Who the deuce can it be from? Pooh! 'tis only from somebody asking for money."

And he tore open the letter. Then he read:

"MY DEAR FRIEND: You have, without doubt, forgotten me, for it is now twenty-five years since we saw each other. I was young; I am old. When I bade you farewell, I quitted Paris in order to follow into the provinces my husband, my old husband, whom you used to call 'my hospital.' Do you remember him? He died five years ago; and now I am returning to Paris to get my daughter married, for I have a daughter, a beautiful girl of eighteen, whom you have never seen. I informed you about her entrance into the world,

but you certainly did not pay much attention to so trifling an event.

"You, you are always the handsome Lormerin; so I have been told. Well, if you still recollect Lise, whom you used to call 'Lison,' come and dine this evening with her, with the elderly Baronne de Vance, your ever faithful friend, who, with some emotion, stretches out to you, without complaining at her lot, a devoted hand, which you must clasp but no longer kiss, my poor 'Jaquet.'

"LISE DE VANCE."

Lormerin's heart began to throb. He remained sunk in his armchair, with the letter on his knees, staring straight before him, overcome by poignant feelings that made the tears mount up to his eyes!

If he had ever loved a woman in his life, it was this one, little Lise, Lise de Vance, whom he called "Cinder-Flower" on account of the strange odor of her hair, and the pale gray of her eyes. Oh! what a fine, pretty, charming creature she was, this frail Baronne, the wife of that old, gouty, pimply Baron who had abruptly carried her off to the provinces, shut her up, kept her apart through jealousy, through jealousy of the handsome Lormerin.

Yes, he had loved her, and he believed that he, too, had been truly loved. She gave him the name of Jaquet, and used to pronounce the word in an exquisite fashion.

A thousand memories that had been effaced came back to him, far off and sweet and melancholy now. One evening, she called on him on her way home from a ball, and they went out for a stroll in the Bois de Boulogne, she in evening dress, he in his dressing-jacket. It was springtime; the weather was

beautiful. The odor of her bodice embalmed the warm air,—the odor of her bodice, and also a little, the odor of her skin. What a divine night! When they reached the lake, as the moon's rays fell across the branches into the water, she began to weep. A little surprised, he asked her why.

She replied:

"I don't know. 'Tis the moon and the water that have affected me. Every time I see poetic things they seize hold of my heart and I have to cry."

He smiled, moved himself, considering her feminine emotion charming—the emotion of a poor little woman whom every sensation overwhelms. And he embraced her passionately, stammering:

"My little Lise, you are exquisite."

What a charming love affair, short-lived and dainty it had been, and all over too so quickly, cut short in the midst of its ardor by this old brute of a Baron, who had carried off his wife, and never shown her afterward to anyone!

Lormerin had forgotten, in good sooth, at the end of two or three months. One woman drives out the other so quickly in Paris, when one is a bachelor! No matter! he had kept a little chapel for her in his heart, for he had loved her alone! He assured himself now that this was so.

He rose up, and said aloud: "Certainly, I will go and dine with her this evening!"

And instinctively he turned round toward the glass in order to inspect himself from head to foot. He reflected: "She must have grown old unpleasantly, more than I have!" And he felt gratified at the thought of showing himself to her still handsome, still fresh, of

astonishing her, perhaps of filling her with emotion, and making her regret those bygone days so far, far distant!

He turned his attention to the other letters. They were not of importance.

The whole day, he kept thinking of this phantom. What was she like now? How funny it was to meet in this way after twenty-five years! Would he alone recognize her?

He made his toilette with feminine coquetry, put on a white waistcoat, which suited him better, with the coat, sent for the hairdresser to give him a finishing touch with the curling-iron, for he had preserved his hair, and started very early in order to show his eagerness to see her.

The first thing he saw on entering a pretty drawing-room, freshly furnished, was his own portrait, an old, faded photograph, dating from the days of his good-fortune, hanging on the wall in an antique silk frame.

He sat down, and waited. A door opened behind him. He rose up abruptly, and, turning round, beheld an old woman with white hair who extended both hands toward him.

He seized them, kissed them one after the other with long, long kisses, then, lifting up his head, he gazed at the woman he had loved.

Yes, it was an old lady, an old lady whom he did not recognize, and who, while she smiled, seemed ready to weep.

He could not abstain from murmuring:

"It is you, Lise?"

She replied:

"Yes, it is I; it is I, indeed. You would not have known me, isn't that so? I have had so much sorrow—so much sorrow. Sorrow has consumed my life.

Look at me now—or rather don't look at me! But how handsome you have kept—and young! If I had by chance met you in the street, I would have cried, 'Jaquet!' Now sit down and let us, first of all, have a chat. And then I'll show you my daughter, my grown-up daughter. You'll see how she resembles me—or rather how I resembled her—no, it is not quite that: she is just like the 'me' of former days—you shall see! But I wanted to be alone with you first. I feared that there would be some emotion on my side, at the first moment. Now it is all over—it is past. Pray be seated, my friend."

He sat down beside her, holding her hand; but he did not know what to say; he did not know this woman—it seemed to him that he had never seen her before. What had he come to do in this house? Of what could he speak? Of the long ago? What was there in common between him and her? He could no longer recall anything to mind in the presence of this grandmotherly face. He could no longer recall to mind all the nice, tender things so sweet, so bitter, that had assailed his heart, some time since, when he thought of the other, of little Lise, of the dainty Cinder-Flower. What then had become of her, the former one, the one he had loved—that woman of far-off dreams, the blonde with gray eyes, the young one who used to call him Jaquet so prettily?

They remained side by side, motionless, both constrained, troubled, profoundly ill at ease.

As they only talked in commonplace phrases, broken and slow, she rose up and pressed the button of the bell.

"I am going to call Renée," she said.

There was a tap at the door, then the rustle of a dress; next, a young voice exclaimed:

"Here I am, mamma!"

Lormerin remained scared, as if at the sight of an apparition.

He stammered:

"Good day, Mademoiselle."

Then, turning toward the mother:

"Oh! it is you!"

In fact, it was she, she whom he had known in bygone days, the Lise who had vanished and came back! In her he found the woman he had won twenty-five years before. This one was even younger still, fresher, more childlike.

He felt a wild desire to open his arms, to clasp her to his heart again, murmuring in her ear:

"Good day, Lison!"

A man-servant announced: "Dinner is ready, Madame." And they proceeded toward the dining-room.

What passed at this dinner? What did they say to him, and what could he say in reply? He found himself plunged in one of those strange dreams which border on insanity. He gazed at the two women with a fixed idea in his mind, a morbid, self-contradictory idea: "Which is the real one?"

The mother smiled, repeating over and over again: "Do you remember?" And it was in the bright eye of the young girl that he found again his memories of the past. Twenty times, he opened his mouth to say to her: "Do you remember, Lison?—" forgetting this white-haired lady who was regarding him with looks of tenderness.

And yet there were moments when he no longer felt sure, when he lost his head. He could see that the woman of

to-day was not exactly the woman of long ago. The other one, the former one, had in her voice, in her glance, in her entire being something which he did not find again in the mother. And he made efforts to recall his ladylove, to seize again what had escaped from her, what this resuscitated one did not possess.

The Baronne said:

"You have lost your old sprightliness, my poor friend."

He murmured: "There are many other things that I have lost!"

But in his heart, touched with emotion, he felt his old love springing to life once more like an awakened wild beast ready to bite him.

The young girl went on chattering, and every now and then some familiar phrase of her mother which she had borrowed, a certain style of speaking and thinking, that resemblance of mind and manner which people acquire by living together, shook Lormerin from head to foot. All these things penetrated him, making the reopened wound of his passion bleed anew.

He got away early, and took a turn along the boulevard. But the image of

this young girl pursued him, haunted him, quickened his heart, inflamed his blood. Instead of two women, he now saw only one, a young one, the one of former days returned, and he loved her as he had loved her prototype in bygone years. He loved her with greater ardor, after an interval of twenty-five years.

He went home to reflect on this strange and terrible thing, and to think on what he should do.

But as he was passing, with a wax-candle in his hand before the glass, the large glass in which he had contemplated himself and admired himself before he started, he saw reflected there an elderly, gray-haired man; and suddenly he recollected what he had been in olden days, in the days of little Lise. He saw himself charming and handsome, as he had been when he was loved! Then, drawing the light nearer, he looked at himself more closely, as one inspects a strange thing with a magnifying glass, tracing the wrinkles, discovering those frightful ravages which he had not perceived till now.

And he sat down, crushed at the sight of himself, at the sight of his lamentable image, murmuring:

"All over, Lormerin!"

My Landlady

"AT THAT time," said George Kerve-
len, "I was living in furnished lodgings
in the Rue des Saints-Pères.

"When my father had made up his mind
that I should go to Paris to continue my
law studies, there had been a long discus-

sion about settling everything. My al-
lowance had been fixed at first at two
thousand five hundred francs,* but my
poor mother was so anxious, that she

*\$500 a year.

said to my father that if I spent my money badly I might not take enough to eat, and then my health would suffer, and so it was settled that a comfortable boarding-house should be found for me, and that the amount should be paid to the proprietor himself, or herself, every month.

"Some of our neighbors told us of a certain Mme. Kergaran, a native of Brittany, who took in boarders, and so my father arranged matters by letter with this respectable person, at whose house I and my luggage arrived one evening.

"Mme. Kergaran was a woman of about forty. She was very stout, had a voice like a drill-sergeant, and decided everything in a very abrupt manner. Her house was narrow, with only one window opening on to the street on each story, which rather gave it the appearance of a ladder of windows, or better, perhaps, of a slice of a house sandwiched in between two others.

"The landlady lived on the first floor with her servant, the kitchen and dining-room were on the second, and four boarders from Brittany lived on the third and fourth, and I had two rooms on the fifth.

"A little dark corkscrew staircase led up to these attics. All day long Mme. Kergaran was up and down these stairs like a captain on board ship. Ten times a day she would go into each room, noisily superintending everything, seeing that the beds were properly made, the clothes well brushed, that the attendance was all that it should be; in a word, she looked after her boarders like a mother, and better than a mother.

"I soon made the acquaintance of my

four fellow-countrymen. Two were medical and two were law students, but all impartially endured the landlady's despotic yoke. They were as frightened of her as a boy robbing an orchard is of a rural policeman.

"I, however, immediately felt that I wished to be independent; it is my nature to rebel. I declared at once that I meant to come in at whatever time I liked, for Mme. Kergaran had fixed twelve o'clock at night as the limit. On hearing this she looked at me for a few moments, and then said:

"'It is quite impossible; I cannot have Annette called up at any hour of the night. You can have nothing to do out-of-doors at such a time.'

"I replied firmly that, according to the law, she was obliged to open the door for me at any time.

"'If you refuse,' I said, 'I shall get a policeman to witness the fact, and go and get a bed at some hotel, at your expense in which I shall be fully justified. You will, therefore, be obliged either to open the door for me or to get rid of me. Do which you please.'

"I laughed in her face as I told her my conditions. She could not speak for a moment for surprise, then she tried to negotiate, but I was firm, and she was obliged to yield. It was agreed that I should have a latchkey, on my solemn undertaking that no one else should know it.

"My energy made such a wholesome impression on her that from that time she treated me with marked favor; she was most attentive, and even showed me a sort of rough tenderness which was not at all displeasing. Sometimes when I was in a jovial mood I would

kiss her by surprise, if only for the sake of getting the box on the ears which she gave me immediately afterward. When I managed to duck my head quickly enough, her hand would pass over me as swiftly as a ball, and I would run away laughing, while she would call after me:

“‘Oh! you wretch, I will pay you out for that.’

“‘However, we soon became real friends.

“‘It was not long before I made the acquaintance of a girl who was employed in a shop, and whom I constantly met. You know what such sort of love affairs are in Paris. One fine day, going to a lecture, you meet a girl going to work arm-in-arm with a friend. You look at her and feel that pleasant little shock which the eyes of some women give you. The next day at the same time, going through the same street, you meet her again, and the next and the succeeding days. At last you speak, and the love affair follows its course just like an illness.

“‘Well, by the end of three weeks I was on that footing with Emma which precedes intimacy. The fall would indeed have taken place much sooner had I known where to bring it about. The girl lived at home, and utterly refused to go to a hotel. I did not know how to manage, but at last I made the desperate resolve to take her to my room some night at about eleven o’clock, under the pretense of giving her a cup of tea. Mme. Kergaran always went to bed at ten, so that we could get in by means of my latchkey without exciting any attention, and go down again in an hour or two in the same way.

“‘After a good deal of entreaty on my part, Emma accepted my invitation.

“‘I did not spend a very pleasant day, for I was by no means easy in my mind. I was afraid of complications, of a catastrophe, of some scandal. At night I went into a *café*, and drank two cups of coffee and three or four glasses of cognac, to give me courage, and when I heard the clock strike half past ten I went slowly to the place of meeting, where she was already waiting for me. She took my arm in a coaxing manner, and we set off slowly toward my lodgings. The nearer we got to the door the more nervous I got, and I thought to myself: ‘If only Mme. Kergaran is in bed already.’

“‘I said to Emma two or three times:

“‘‘Above all things, don’t make any noise on the stairs,’ to which she replied, laughing:

“‘‘Are you afraid of being heard?’

“‘‘No,’ I said, ‘but I am afraid of waking the man who sleeps in the room next to me, who is not at all well.’

“‘When I got near the house I felt as frightened as a man does who is going to the dentist’s. All the windows were dark so no doubt everybody was asleep, and I breathed again. I opened the door as carefully as a thief, let my fair companion in, shut it behind me, and went upstairs on tiptoe, holding my breath and striking wax-matches lest the girl should make a false step.

“‘As we passed the landlady’s door I felt my heart beating very quickly. But we reached the second floor then the third, and at last the fifth, and got into my room. Victory!

“‘However I only dared to speak in a

whisper and took off my boots so as not to make any noise. The tea, which I made over a spirit-lamp, was soon drunk, and then I became pressing, till little by little, as if in play, I, one by one, took off my companion's garments. She yielded while resisting, blushing, confused.

"She had absolutely nothing on except a short white petticoat when my door suddenly opened, and Mme. Kergaran appeared with a candle in her hand, in exactly the same costume as Emma.

"I jumped away from her and remained standing up, looking at the two women, who were looking at each other. What was going to happen?

"My landlady said, in a lofty tone of voice which I had never heard from her before:

" 'Monsieur Kervelen, I will not have prostitutes in my house.'

" 'But, Madame Kergaran,' I stammered, 'the young lady is a friend of mine. She just came in to have a cup of tea.'

" 'People don't take tea in their chemises. You will please make this person go directly.'

"Emma, in a natural state of consternation, began to cry, and hid her face in her petticoat, and I lost my head, not knowing what to do or say. My landlady added with irresistible authority:

" 'Help her to dress, and take her out at once.'

"It was certainly the only thing I could do, so I picked up her dress from the floor, put it over her head, and began to fasten it as best I could. She helped me, crying all the time, hurrying and making all sorts of mistakes and unable to find either buttonholes or

laces, while Mme. Kergaran stood by motionless, with the candle in her hand, looking at us with the severity of a judge.

"As soon as Emma was dressed, without even stopping to button her boots, she rushed past the landlady and ran downstairs. I followed her in my slippers and half undressed, and kept repeating: 'Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!'

"I felt that I ought to say something to her, but I could not find anything. I overtook her just by the street-door, and tried to take her into my arms, but she pushed me violently away, saying in a low, nervous voice:

" 'Leave me alone, leave me alone!' and so ran out into the street, closing the door behind her.

"When I went upstairs again I found that Mme. Kergaran was waiting on the first landing. I went up slowly, expecting, and ready for, anything.

"Her door was open, and she called me in, saying in a severe voice:

" 'I want to speak to you, M. Kervelen.'

"I went in, with my head bent. She put her candle on the mantelpiece, and then, folding her arms over her expansive bosom, which a fine white dressing-jacket hardly covered, she said:

" 'So, Monsieur Kervelen, you think my house is a house of ill-fame?'

"I was not at all proud. I murmured:

" 'Oh dear, no! But Mme. Kergaran, you must not be angry; you know what young men are.'

" 'I know,' was her answer, 'that I will not have such creatures here, so you will understand that. I expect to

have my house respected, and I will not have it lose its reputation, you understand me? I know—'

"She went on thus for at least twenty minutes, overwhelming me with the good name of her house, with reasons

for her indignation, and loading me with severe reproofs. I went to bed crestfallen, and resolved never again to try such an experiment, so long, at least, as I continued to be a lodger of Mme. Kergaran."

The Horrible

THE shadows of a blamy night were slowly falling. The women remained in the drawing-room of the villa. The men, seated or astride on garden-chairs, were smoking in front of the door, forming a circle round a table laden with cups and wineglasses.

Their cigars shone like eyes in the darkness which, minute by minute, was growing thicker. They had been talking about a frightful accident which had occurred the night before—two men and three women drowned before the eyes of the guests in the river opposite.

General de G—— remarked:

"Yes, these things are affecting, but they are not horrible.

"The horrible, that well-known word, means much more than the terrible. A frightful accident like this moves, upsets, scares; it does not horrify. In order that we should experience horror, something more is needed than the mere excitation of the soul, something more than the spectacle of the dreadful death; there must be a shuddering sense of mystery or a sensation of abnormal terror beyond the limits of nature. A man who dies, even in the most dramatic conditions, does not excite horror; a field of battle is not horrible; blood is

not horrible; the vilest crimes are rarely horrible.

"Now, here are two personal examples, which have shown me what is the meaning of horror:

"It was during the war of 1870. We were retreating toward Pont-Audemer, after having passed through Rouen. The army, consisting of about twenty thousand men, twenty thousand men in disorder, disbanded, demoralized, exhausted, was going to reform at Havre.

"The earth was covered with snow. The night was falling. They had not eaten anything since the day before, and were flying rapidly, the Prussians not far off. The Norman country, livid, dotted with the shadows of the trees surrounding the farms, stretched away under a heavy and sinister black sky.

"Nothing else could be heard in the wan twilight save the confused sound, soft and undefined, of a marching throng, an endless tramping, mingled with the vague clink of canteens or sabers. The men, bent, round-shouldered, dirty, in many cases even in rags, dragged themselves along, hurrying through the snow, with a long broken-backed stride.

"The skin of their hands stuck to the steel of their muskets' butt-ends for it

was freezing dreadfully that night. I frequently saw a little soldier take off his shoes in order to walk barefooted, so much did his footgear bruise him; and with every step he left a track of blood. Then, after some time, he sat down in a field for a few minutes' rest, and never got up again. Every man who sat down died.

"Should we have left behind us those poor exhausted soldiers, who fondly counted on being able to start afresh as soon as they had somewhat refreshed their stiffened legs? Now, scarcely had they ceased to move, and to make their almost frozen blood circulate in their veins, than an unconquerable torpor congealed them, nailed them to the ground, closed their eyes, and in one second the overworked human mechanism collapsed. They gradually sank down, their heads falling toward their knees—without, however, quite tumbling over, for their loins and their limbs lost the capacity for moving, and became as hard as wood, impossible to bend or straighten.

"The rest of us, more robust, kept still straggling on, chilled to the marrow of our bones, advancing by dint of forced movement through the night, through that snow, through that cold and deadly country, crushed by pain, by defeat, by despair, above all overcome by the abominable sensation of abandonment, of death, of nothingness.

"I saw two gendarmes holding by the arm a curious-looking little man, old, beardless, of truly surprising aspect.

"They were looking out for an officer, believing that they had caught a spy. The word 'Spy' at once spread through the midst of the stragglers, and they gathered in a group round the prisoner.

A voice exclaimed: 'He must be shot!' And all these soldiers who were falling from utter prostration, only holding themselves on their feet by leaning on their guns, felt of a sudden that thrill of furious and bestial anger which urges on a mob to massacre.

"I wanted to speak! I was at that time in command of a battalion; but they no longer recognized the authority of their commanding officers; they would have shot me.

"One of the gendarmes said: 'He has been following us for the last three days. He has been asking information from everyone about the artillery.'

"I took it on myself to question this person:

"'What are you doing? What do you want? Why are you accompanying the army?'

"He stammered out some words in some unintelligible dialect. He was, indeed, a strange being, with narrow shoulders, a sly look, and such an agitated air in my presence that I had no longer any real doubt that he was a spy. He seemed very aged and feeble. He kept staring at me from under his eyes with a humble, stupid, and crafty air.

"The men all round us exclaimed:

"'To the wall! to the wall!'

"I said to the gendarmes:

"'Do you answer for the prisoner?'

"I had not ceased speaking when a terrible push threw me on my back, and in a second I saw the man seized by the furious soldiers, thrown down, struck, dragged along the side of the road, and flung against a tree. He fell in the snow, nearly dead already.

"And immediately they shot him.

The soldiers fired at him, reloaded their guns, fired again with the desperate energy of brutes. They fought with each other to have a shot at him, filed off in front of the corpse, and kept firing at him, just as people at a funeral keep sprinkling holy water in front of a coffin.

"But suddenly a cry arose of 'The Prussians! the Prussians!' and all along the horizon I heard the great noise of this panic-stricken army in full flight.

"The panic, generated by these shots fired at this vagabond, had filled his very executioners with terror; and, without realizing that they were themselves the originators of the scare, they rushed away and disappeared in the darkness.

"I remained alone in front of the corpse with the two gendarmes whom duty had compelled to stay with me.

"They lifted up this riddled piece of flesh, bruised and bleeding.

"'He must be examined,' said I to them.

"And I handed them a box of vestas which I had in my pocket. One of the soldiers had another box. I was standing between the two.

"The gendarme, who was feeling the body, called out:

"'Clothed in a blue blouse, trousers, and a pair of shoes.'

"The first match went out; we lighted a second. The man went on, as he turned out the pockets:

"'A horn knife, check handkerchief, a snuffbox, a bit of pack-thread, a piece of bread.'

"The second match went out; we lighted a third. The gendarme, after having handled the corpse for a long time, said:

"'That is all.'

"I said:

"'Strip him. We shall perhaps find something near the skin'

"And, in order that the two soldiers might help each other in this task, I stood between them to give them light. I saw them, by the rapid and speedily extinguished flash of the match, take off the garments one by one, and expose to view that bleeding bundle of flesh still warm, though lifeless.

"And suddenly one of them exclaimed:

"'Good God, Colonel, it is a woman!'

"I cannot describe to you the strange and poignant sensation of pain that moved my heart. I could not believe it, and I kneeled down in the snow before this shapeless pulp of flesh to see for myself: it was a woman.

"The two gendarmes, speechless and stunned, waited for me to give my opinion on the matter. But I did not know what to think, what theory to adopt.

"Then the brigadier slowly drawled out:

"'Perhaps she came to look for a son of hers in the artillery, whom she had not heard from.'

"And the other chimed in:

"'Perhaps indeed that is so.'

"And I, who had seen some terrible things in my time, began to weep. I felt, in the presence of this corpse, in that icy cold night, in the midst of that gloomy plain, at the sight of this mystery, at the sight of this murdered stranger, the meaning of that word 'horror.'

"Now, I had the same sensation last year while interrogating one of the sur-

vivors of the Flatters Mission, an Algerian sharpshooter.

"You probably know some of the details of this atrocious drama. It is possible, however, that you are unacquainted with all.

"The Colonel traveled through the desert into the Soudan, and passed through the immense territory of the Touaregs, who are, in that great ocean of sand which stretches from the Atlantic to Egypt and from the Soudan to Algeria, a sort of pirates resembling those who ravaged the seas in former days.

"The guides who accompanied the column belonged to the tribe of Chambaa, of Ouargla.

"One day, they pitched their camp in the middle of the desert, and the Arabs declared that, as the spring was a little farther away, they would go with all their camels to look for water.

"Only one man warned the Colonel that he had been betrayed. Flatters did not believe this, and accompanied the convoy with the engineers, the doctors, and nearly all his officers.

"They were massacred round the spring and all the camels captured.

"The Captain of the Arab Intelligence Department at Ouargla, who had remained in the camp, took command of the survivors, spahis and sharpshooters, and commenced the retreat, leaving behind the baggage and the provisions for want of camels to carry them.

"Then they started on their journey through this solitude without shade and without limit, under a devouring sun, which parched them from morning till night.

"One tribe came to tender its sub-

mission and brought dates as a tribute. They were poisoned. Nearly all the French died, and among them, the last officer.

"There now only remained a few spahis, with their quartermaster, Pobéguin, and some native sharpshooters of the Chambaa tribe. They had still two camels left. These disappeared one night along with two Arabs.

"Then the survivors feared that they would have to eat each other up. As soon as they discovered the flight of the two men with the two beasts, those who remained separated, and proceeded to march, one by one, through the soft sun, at a distance of more than a gunshot from each other.

"So they went on all day, and, when they reached a spring, each of them came up to drink at it in turn as soon as each solitary marcher had moved forward the number of yards arranged upon. And thus they continued marching the whole day, raising, everywhere they passed in that level burned-up expanse, those little columns of dust which, at a distance, indicate those who are trudging through the desert.

"But, one morning, one of the travelers made a sudden turn, and drew nearer to his neighbor. And they all stopped to look.

"The man toward whom the famished soldier drew near did not fly, but lay flat on the ground, and took aim at the one who was coming on. When he believed he was within gunshot, he fired. The other was not hit, and continued to advance, and cocking his gun in turn, killed his comrade.

"Then from the entire horizon, the others rushed to seek their share. And

he who had killed the fallen man, cutting the corpse into pieces, distributed it.

"Then they once more placed themselves at fixed distances, these irreconcilable allies, preparing for the next murder which would bring them together.

"For two days they lived on this human flesh, which they divided among each other. Then, the famine came back, and he who had killed the first

man began killing afresh. And again, like a butcher, he cut up the corpse and offered it to his comrades, keeping only his own portion of it. The retreat of cannibals continued. The last Frenchman, Pobéguin, was massacred at the side of a well the very night before the supplies arrived.

"Do you understand now what I mean by the 'horrible?'"

This was the story told us a few nights ago by General de G——.

The First Snowfall

THE long promenade of La Croisette runs in a curve up to the edge of the blue water. Over there, at the right, the Esterel advances far into the sea. It obstructs the view, shutting in the horizon with the pretty southern aspect of its peaked, numerous, and fantastic summits.

At the left, the isles of Sainte-Marguerite and Saint-Honorat, lying in the water, present long aisles of fir-trees.

And all along the great gulf, all along the tall mountains that encircle Cannes, the white villa residences seem to be sleeping in the sunlight. You can see them from a distance, the bright houses, scattered from the top to the bottom of the mountains, dotting the dark greenery with specks of snow.

Those near the water open their gates on the vast promenade which is lashed by the quiet waves. The air is soft and balmy. It is one of those days when in this southern climate the chill of winter is not felt. Above the walls

of the gardens may be seen orange-trees and citron-trees full of golden fruit. Ladies advance with slow steps over the sand of the avenue, followed by children rolling hoops or chatting with gentlemen.

* * * * *

A young lady had just passed out through the door of her coquettish little house facing La Croisette. She stops for a moment to gaze at the promenaders, smiles, and, with the gait of one utterly enfeebled, makes her way toward an empty bench right in front of the sea. Fatigued after having gone twenty paces, she sits down out of breath. Her pale face seems that of a dead woman. She coughs, and raises to her lips her transparent fingers as if to stop those shakings that exhaust her.

She gazes at the sky full of sunshine and at the swallows, at the zigzag summits of the Esterel over there, and at the sea, quite close to her, so blue, so calm, so beautiful.

She smiles still, and murmurs:

"Oh! how happy I am!"

She knows, however, that she is going to die, that she will never see the spring-time, that in a year, along the same promenade, these same people who pass before her now will come again to breathe the warm air of this charming spot, with their children a little bigger, with their hearts all filled with hopes, with tenderness, with happiness, while at the bottom of an oak coffin the poor flesh which is left to her still to-day will have fallen into a condition of rotteness, leaving only her bones lying in the silk robe which she has selected for a winding-sheet.

She will be no more. Everything in life will go on as before for others. For her life will be over—over forever. She will be no more. She smiles, and inhales as well as she can, with her diseased lungs, the perfumed air of the gardens.

And she sinks into a reverie.

* * * * *

She recalls the past. She had been married, four years ago, to a Norman gentleman. He was a strong young man, bearded, healthy looking, with wide shoulders, narrow mind, and joyous disposition.

They had been united through worldly motives which she did not quite understand. She would willingly have said "Yes." She did say "Yes" with a movement of the head in order not to thwart her father and mother. She was a Parisian, gay and full of the joy of living.

Her husband brought her home to his Norman château. It was a huge stone building surrounded by tall trees of

great age. A high clump of fir-trees shut out the view in front. On the right an opening in the trees presented a view of the plain which stretched out, quite flat, up to the distant farmsteads. A crossroad passed before the boundary-line leading to the highroad three kilometers away.

Oh! she could remember everything—her arrival, her first day in her new abode, and her isolated fate afterward.

When she stepped out of the carriage, she glanced at the old building and laughingly exclaimed:

"It does not look gay!"

Her husband began to laugh in his turn and replied:

"Pooh! we get used to it! You'll see. I never feel bored in it, for my part."

That day they passed their time in embracing each other, and she did not find it too long. This lasted for the best part of three months. The days passed one after the other in insignificant yet absorbing occupations. She learned the value and the importance of the little things of life. She knew that people can interest themselves in the price of eggs which cost a few centimes more or less according to the seasons.

It was summer. She went to the fields to see the harvest cut. The gaiety of the sunshine kept up the gaiety of her heart.

The autumn came. Her husband went hunting. He started in the morning with his two dogs, Medor and Mirza. Then she remained alone, without grieving herself, moreover, at Henry's absence. She was, however, very fond of him, but he was not missed by her. When he returned home, her affection was specially absorbed by the

dogs. She took care of them every evening with a mother's affection, caressed them incessantly, gave them a thousand charming little names which she had no idea of applying to her husband.

He invariably told her all about his hunting. He pointed out the places where he found partridges, expressed his astonishment at not having caught any hares in Joseph Ledentu's clover, or else appeared indignant at the conduct of M. Lechapelier, of Havre, who always followed the border of his estates to shoot game that had been started by him, Henry de Parville.

She replied: "Yes, indeed; it is not right," thinking of something else all the while.

The winter came, the Norman winter, cold and rainy. The endless rainstorms came down on the slates of the great many-angled roof, rising like a blade toward the sky. The road seemed like streams of mud, the country a plain of mud, and no noise could be heard save that of water falling; no movement could be seen save the whirling flight of crows rolling themselves out like a cloud, alighting on a field, and then hurrying away again.

About four o'clock, the army of dark, flying creatures came and perched in the tall beeches at the left of the château, emitting deafening cries. During nearly an hour, they fluttered from tree-top to tree-top, seemed to be fighting, croaked, and made the gray branches move with their black wings. She gazed at them, each evening, with a pressure of the heart, so deeply was she penetrated by the lugubrious melancholy of the night falling on the desolate grounds.

Then she rang for the lamp, and she

drew near the fire. She burned heaps of wood without succeeding in warming the spacious apartments invaded by the humidity. She felt cold every day, everywhere, in the drawing-room, at meals, in her own apartment. It seemed to her she was cold even in the marrow of her bones. He only came in to dinner, he was always hunting, or else occupied with sowing seed, tilling the soil, and all the work of the country.

He used to come back jolly and covered with mud, rubbing his hands while he exclaimed:

"What wretched weather!" Or else: "It is a good thing to have a fire." Or sometimes: "Well, how are you to-day? Do you feel in good spirits?"

He was happy, in good health, without desires, thinking of nothing else save this simple, sound, and quiet life.

About December, when the snow had come, she suffered so much from the icy-cold air of the château which seemed to have acquired a chill with the centuries it had passed through, as human beings do with years, that she asked her husband one evening:

"Look here, Henry! You ought to have a hot-air plant put into the house; it would dry the walls. I assure you I cannot warm myself from morning till night."

At first he was stunned at this extravagant idea of introducing a hot-air plant into his manor-house. It would have seemed more natural to him to have his dogs fed out of his silver plate. Then, he gave a tremendous laugh which made his chest heave, while he exclaimed:

"A hot-air plant here! A hot-air

plant here! Ha! ha! ha! what a good joke!"

She persisted:

"I assure you, dear, I feel frozen; you don't feel it because you are always moving about; but, all the same, I feel frozen."

He replied, still laughing:

"Pooh! you will get used to it, and besides it is excellent for the health. You will only be all the better for it. We are not Parisians, damn it! to live in hot-houses. And besides the spring is quite near."

* * * * *

About the beginning of January, a great misfortune befell her. Her father and her mother died of a carriage-accident. She came to Paris for the funeral. And her mind was entirely plunged in grief on account of it for about six months.

The softness of fine days at length awakened her, and she lived a sad, drifting life of languor until autumn.

When the cold weather came back, she was brought face to face, for the first time, with the gloomy future. What was she to do? Nothing. What was going to happen to her henceforth? Nothing. What expectation, what hope, could revive her heart? None. A doctor who was consulted declared that she would never have children.

Sharper, more penetrating still than the year before, the cold made her suffer continually.

She stretched out her shivering hands to the big flames. The glaring fire burned her face; but icy puffs seemed to slip down her back and to penetrate between the flesh and her underclothing. And she shook from head to foot. In-

numerable currents of air appeared to have taken up their abode in the apartment, living, crafty currents of air, as cruel as enemies. She encountered them every moment; they were incessantly buffeting her, sometimes on the face, sometimes on the hands, sometimes on the neck, with their treacherous, frozen breath.

Once more she spoke of a hot-air plant; but her husband heard her request as if she were asking for the moon. The introduction of such an apparatus at Parville appeared to him as impossible as the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone.

Having been at Rouen on business one day he brought back to his wife a dainty foot-warmer made of copper, which he laughingly called a "portable hot-water heater"; and he considered that this would prevent her henceforth from ever being cold.

Toward the end of December she understood that she could not live thus always, and she said timidly one evening at dinner:

"Listen, dear! Are we not going to spend a week or two in Paris before spring?"

He was stupefied:

"In Paris? In Paris? But what are we to do there? No, by Jove! We are better off here. What odd ideas come into your head sometimes."

She faltered:

"It might distract us a little."

He did not understand:

"What is it you want to distract you? Theaters, evening parties, dinners in town? You know, however, well that in coming here you ought not to expect any distractions of that kind!"

She saw a reproach in these words and in the tone in which they were uttered. She relapsed into silence. She was timid and gentle, without resisting power and without strength of will.

In January, the cold weather returned with violence. Then the snow covered the earth.

One evening, as she watched the great whirling cloud of crows winding round the trees, she began to weep, in spite of herself.

Her husband came in. He asked, in great surprise:

"What is the matter with you?"

He was happy, quite happy, never having dreamed of another life or other pleasures. He had been born and had grown up in this melancholy district. He felt well in his own house, at his ease in body and mind.

He did not realize that we may desire events, have a thirst for changing pleasures; he did not understand that it does not seem natural to certain beings to remain in the same places during the four seasons; he seemed not to know that spring, summer, autumn, and winter, have for multitudes of persons, new pleasures in new countries.

She could not say anything in reply, and she quickly dried her eyes. At last she murmured, in a distracted sort of way:

"I am—I—I am a little sad—I am a little bored."

But she was seized with terror for having even said so much, and she added very quickly:

"And besides—I am—I am a little cold."

At this statement he got angry:

"Ah! yes, still your idea of the hot-

air plant. But look here, deuce take it! you have only had one cold since you came here."

* * * * *

The night came. She went up to her room, for she had insisted on having a separate apartment. She went to bed. Even in the bed, she felt cold. She thought: "Is it to be like this always, always till death?"

And she thought of her husband. How could he have said this:

"You have only had one cold since you came here?"

Then she must get ill; she must cough in order that he might understand what she suffered!

And she was filled with indignation, the angry indignation of a weak, a timid being.

She must cough. Then, without doubt, he would take pity on her. Well, she would cough; he would hear her coughing; the doctor should be called in; he would see that her husband would see.

She got up with her legs and her feet naked, and a childish idea made her smile:

"I want a hot-air plant, and I must have it. I shall cough so much that he'll have to put one into the house."

And she sat down almost naked in a chair. She waited an hour, two hours. She shivered, but she did not catch cold. Then she resolved to make use of a bold expedient.

She noiselessly left her room, descended the stairs, and opened the garden-gate.

The earth, covered with snow, seemed dead. She abruptly thrust forward her naked foot, and plunged it into the light

and icy froth. A sensation of cold, painful as a wound mounted up to her heart. However, she stretched out the other leg and began to descend the steps slowly.

Then she advanced through the grass, saying to herself:

"I'll go as far as the fir-trees."

She walked with quick steps, out of breath, choking every time she drove her foot through the snow.

She touched the first fir-tree with her hand, as if to convince herself that she carried out her plan to the end; then she went back into the house. She believed two or three times that she was going to fall, so torpid and weak did she feel. Before going in, meanwhile, she sat in that icy snow, and she even gathered some in order to rub on her breast.

Then she went in, and got into bed. It seemed to her, at the end of an hour, that she had a swarm of ants in her throat, and that other ants were running all over her limbs. She slept, however.

Next day, she was coughing, and she could not get up.

She got inflammation of the lungs. She became delirious, and in her delirium she asked for a hot-air plant. The doctor insisted on having one put in. Henry yielded, but with an irritated repugnance.

* * * * *

She could not be cured. The lungs, severely attacked, made those who attended on her uneasy about her life.

"If she remains here, she will not last as long as the next cold weather," said the doctor.

She was sent to the south. She came to Cannes, recognized the sun, loved the

sea, and breathed the air of orange-blossoms. Then in the spring, she returned north. But she lived with the fear of being cured, with the fear of the long winters of Normandy; and as soon as she was better, she opened her window by night while thinking of the sweet banks of the Mediterranean. And now she was going to die. She knew it and yet she was contented.

She unfolds a newspaper which she had not already opened, and reads this heading:

"THE FIRST SNOW IN PARIS."

After this, she shivers and yet smiles. She looks across the Esterel which is turning rose-colored under the setting sun. She looks at the vast blue sea, so very blue also, and rises up and returns to the house, with slow steps, only stopping to cough, for she had remained out too long; and she has caught cold, a slight cold.

She finds a letter from her husband. She opens it still smiling, and she reads:

"MY DEAR LOVE: I hope you are going on well, and that you do not regret too much our beautiful district. We have had for some days past a good frost which announces snow. For my part, I adore this weather, and you understand that I am keeping that cursed hot-air plant of yours going—"

She ceases reading, quite happy at the thought that she has had her hot-air plant. Her right hand, which holds the letter, falls down slowly over her knees, while she raises her left hand to her mouth, as if to calm the obstinate cough which is tearing her chest.

The Wooden Shoes

THE old priest was sputtering out the last words of his sermon over the white caps of the peasant women, and the rough or greasy heads of the men. The large baskets of the farmers' wives who had come from a distance to attend mass were on the ground beside them, and the heavy heat of a July day caused them all to exhale a smell like that of cattle, or of a flock of sheep, and the cocks could be heard crowing through the large west door, which was wide open, as well as the lowing of the cows in a neighboring field.

"As God wishes. Amen!" the priest said. Then he ceased, opened a book, and, as he did every week, began to give notice of all the small parish events for the following week. He was an old man with white hair who had been in the parish for over forty years, and from the pulpit was in the habit of discoursing familiarly to them all; so he went on: "I will recommend Désiré Vallin, who is very ill, to your prayers, and also La Paumelle, who is not recovering from her confinement satisfactorily."

He had forgotten the rest, and so he looked for the slips of paper which were put away in a breviary. At last he found two and continued: "I will not have the lads and girls come into the church-yard in the evening, as they do; otherwise I shall inform the rural policeman. Monsieur Césaire Omont would like to find a respectable girl as servant." He reflected for a few moments, and then added: "That is all, my brethren, and I wish that all of you may find the Divine mercy." And he came down from the pulpit, to finish mass.

When the Malandains had returned to their cottage, which was the last in the village of La Sablière, on the road to Fourville, the father, a thin, wrinkled old peasant, sat down at the table, while his wife took the saucepan off the fire, and Adelaide, the daughter, took the glasses and plates out of the sideboard. Then the father said: "I think that place at Maître Omont's ought to be a good one, as he is a widower and his daughter-in-law does not like him. He is all alone and has money. I think it would be a good thing to send Adelaide there."

His wife put the black saucepan on to the table, took the lid off, and while the steam, which smelled strongly of cabbage, rose into the air she pondered on the suggestion. Presently the old man continued: "He has got some money, that is certain, but any one going there ought to be very sharp, and Adelaide is not that at all."

His wife replied: "I might go and see, all the same," and turning to her daughter, a strapping, silly looking girl with yellow hair and fat, red cheeks like apples, she said: "Do you hear, you great silly? You are to go to Maître Omont's and offer yourself as his servant, and you will do whatever he tells you."

The girl began to laugh in a foolish manner, without replying, and then the three began their dinner. In a few minutes, the father continued: "Listen to me, girl, and try not to make a mistake about what I am going to say to you." And slowly and minutely he laid down for her her line of conduct, anticipating the minutest details, and preparing her

for the conquest of an old widower who was on unfriendly terms with his family. The mother ceased eating to listen to him, and she sat there, with her fork in her hand, looking at her husband and her daughter by turns, and following every word with concentrated and silent attention, while Adelaide remained listless, docile, and stupid, with vague and wandering eyes.

As soon as their meal was over, her mother made her put her cap on, and they both started off to see Monsieur Césaire Omont. He lived in a small, brick house adjoining his tenants' cottages, for he had retired, and was living by subdividing and letting his land.

He was about fifty-five years old, and was stout, jovial, and rough-mannered, as rich men often are. He laughed and shouted loud enough to make the walls fall down, drank brandy and cider by the glassful, and was said to be still of an amorous disposition, in spite of his age. He liked to walk about his fields with his hands behind his back, digging his wooden shoes into the fat soil, looking at the sprouting corn or the flowering colza with the eye of a retired farmer, at his ease, who likes to see the crops but does not trouble himself about them any longer. People used to say of him: "There is a Mr. Merry-man, who does not get up in a good temper every day."

He received the two women, as he was finishing his coffee, with his fat stomach against the table, and turning round said: "What do you want?"

The mother was spokeswoman. "This is our girl Adelaide, and I have come to ask you to take her as servant, as

Monsieur le Curé told us you wanted one."

Maître Omont looked at the girl, and then he said roughly: "How old is the great she-goat?"

"Twenty last Michaelmas-Day, Monsieur Omont."

"That is settled, she will have fifteen francs a month and her food. I shall expect her to-morrow, to make my soup in the morning." And he dismissed the two women.

The next day Adelaide entered upon her duties, and began to work hard, without saying a word, as she was in the habit of doing at home. About nine o'clock, as she was scrubbing the kitchen floor, Monsieur Omont called her: "Adelaide!"

She came immediately saying: "Here I am, master." As soon as she was opposite him, with her red and neglected hands, and her troubled looks, he said. "Now just listen to me, so that there may be no mistake between us. You are my servant, but nothing else; you understand what I mean. We shall keep our shoes apart."

"Yes, master."

"Each in our own place, my girl, you in your kitchen; I in my dining-room, and with that exception, everything will be for you just as it is for me. Is that settled?"

"Yes, master."

"Very well; that is all right, and now go to your work."

And she went out, to attend to her duties, and at midday she served up her master's dinner in the little drawing-room with the flowered paper on the walls, and then, when the soup was on

the table, she went to tell him. "Dinner is ready, master."

He went in and sat down, looked round, unfolded his table napkin, hesitated for a moment and then in a voice of thunder he shouted: "Adelaide!"

She rushed in, terribly frightened, for he had shouted as if he meant to murder her.

"Well, in heaven's name, where is your place?"

"But, master!"

"I do not like to eat alone," he roared; "you will sit there, or go to the devil, if you don't choose to do so. Go and get your plate and glass."

She brought them in, feeling very frightened, and stammered: "Here I am, master," and then sat down opposite to him. He grew jovial; clinked glasses with her, rapped the table, and told her stories to which she listened with downcast eyes, without daring to say a word, and from time to time she got up to fetch some bread, cider, or plates. When she brought in the coffee she only put one cup before him, and then he grew angry again, and growled: "Well, what about yourself?"

"I never take any, master."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not like it."

Then he burst out afresh: "I am not fond of having my coffee by myself, confound it! If you will not take it here, you can go to the devil. Go and get a cup, and make haste about it."

So she went and fetched a cup, sat down again, tasted the black liquor and made faces over it, but swallowed it to the last drop, under her master's furious looks. Then he made her also drink

her first glass of brandy as an extra drop, the second as a livener, and the third as a kick behind, and then he told her to go and wash up her plates and dishes, adding, that she was "a good sort of girl."

It was the same at supper, after which she had to play dominoes with him. Then he sent her to bed, saying that he should come upstairs soon. So she went to her room, a garret under the roof, and after saying her prayers, undressed and got into bed. But very soon she sprang up in a fright, for a furious shout had shaken the house. "Adelaide!" She opened her door, and replied from her attic: "Here I am, master."

"Where are you?"

"In bed, of course, master."

Then he roared out: "Will you come downstairs, in heaven's name? I do not like to sleep alone, and, by Jove, if you object, you can just go at once."

Then in her terror she replied from upstairs: "I will come, master." She looked for her candle, and he soon heard her small clogs pattering down the stairs. When she had got to the bottom steps, he seized her by the arm, and as soon as she had left her light wooden shoes by the side of her master's heavy boots, he pushed her into his room, growling out: "Quicker than that, confound it!"

And without knowing what she was saying she answered: "Here I am, here I am, master."

Six months later, when she went to see her parents one Sunday, her father looked at her curiously, and then said: "Are you not *enceinte*?"

She remained thunderstruck, and

looked at her waist, and then said: "No, I do not think so."

Then he asked her, for he wanted to know everything: "Just tell me, didn't you mix your clogs together, one night?"

"Yes, I mixed them the first night, and then every other night."

"Well, then you are *enceinte*, you great fool!"

On hearing that, she began to sob, and stammered: "How could I know? How was I to know?" Old Malandain looked at her knowingly, and appeared very pleased, and then he asked: "What did you not know?" And amid tears she replied: "How was I to know how children were made?" And when her mother came back, the man said, with-

out any anger: "There, she is *enceinte*, now."

But the woman was furious, her finer instinct revolted, and she called her daughter, who was in tears, every name she could think of—a "trollop" and a "strumpet." Then, however, the old man made her hold her tongue, and as he took up his cap to go and talk the matter over with Master Césaire Omont, he remarked: "She is actually more stupid than I thought she was; she did not even know what he was doing, the fool!"

On the next Sunday, after the sermon, the old Curé published the banns between Monsieur Onufre-Césaire Omont and Céleste-Adelaide Malandain.

Boitelle

PÈRE BOITELLE (Antoine) had the reputation through the whole country of a specialist in dirty jobs. Every time a pit, a dunghill, or a cesspool required to be cleared away, or a dirt-hole to be cleansed out, he was the person employed to do it.

He would come there with his night-man's tools and his wooden shoes covered with dirt, and would set to work, whining incessantly about the nature of his occupation. When people asked him why he did this loathsome work, he would reply resignedly:

"Faith, 'tis for my children whom I must support. This brings in more than anything else."

He had, indeed, fourteen children. If anyone asked him what had become of

them, he would say with an air of indifference:

"There are only eight of them left in the house. One is out at service, and five are married."

When the questioner wanted to know whether they were well married, he replied vivaciously:

"I did not cross them. I crossed them in nothing. They married just as they pleased. We shouldn't go against people's likings—it turns our badly. I am a night-cartman because my parents went against my likings. But for that I would have become a workman like the others."

Here is the way his parents had thwarted him in his likings:

He was at that time a soldier stationed

at Havre, not more stupid than another, or sharper either, a rather simple fellow, in truth. During his hours of freedom his greatest pleasure was to walk along the quay, where the bird-dealers congregate. Sometimes alone, sometimes with a soldier from his own part of the country, he would slowly saunter along by cages where parrots with green backs and yellow heads from the banks of the Amazon, parrots with gray backs and red heads from Senegal, enormous macaws, which looked like birds brought up in conservatories, with their flower-like feathers, plumes, and tufts, paroquets of every shape, painted with minute care by that excellent miniaturist, God Almighty, with the little young birds, hopping about, yellow, blue, and variegated, mingling their cries with the noise of the quay, added to the din caused by the unloading of the vessels, as well as by passengers and vehicles—a violent clamor, loud, shrill, and deafening, as if from some distant, monstrous forest.

Boitelle would stop, with strained eyes, wide-open mouth, laughing and enraptured, showing his teeth to the captive cockatoos, who kept nodding their white or yellow topknots toward the glaring red of his breeches and the copper buckle of his belt. When he found a bird that could talk, he put questions to it, and if it happened at the time to be disposed to reply and to hold a conversation with him, he would remain there till nightfall filled with gaiety and contentment. He also found heaps of fun in looking at the monkeys, and could conceive no greater luxury for a rich man than to possess these animals, just like cats and dogs. This taste for the exotic he had in his blood, as people

have a taste for the chase, or for medicine, or for the priesthood. He could not refrain, every time the gates of the barracks opened, from going back to the quay, as if drawn toward it by an irresistible longing.

Now, on one occasion, having stopped almost in ecstasy before an enormous ararauna, which was swelling out its plumes, bending forward, and bridling up again, as if making the court-courtesies of parrot-land, he saw the door of a little tavern adjoining the bird-dealer's shop opening, and his attention was attracted by a young negress, with a silk kerchief tied round her head, sweeping into the street the rubbish and the sand of the establishment.

Boitelle's attention was soon divided between the bird and the woman, and he really could not tell which of these two beings he contemplated with the greater astonishment and delight.

The negress, having got rid of the sweepings of the tavern, raised her eyes, and, in her turn, was dazzled by the soldier's uniform. There she stood facing him with her broom in her hands as if she were presenting arms for him, while the ararauna continued making courtesies. Now at the end of a few seconds the soldier began to get embarrassed by this attention, and he walked away gingerly so as not to present the appearance of beating a retreat.

But he came back. Almost every day he passed in front of the Colonial tavern, and often he could distinguish through the windowpanes the figure of the little black-skinned maid filling out "bocks" or glasses of brandy for the sailors of the port. Frequently, too, she would come out to the door on seeing

him. Soon, without even having exchanged a word, they smiled at one another like old acquaintances; and Boitelle felt his heart moved when he saw suddenly glittering between the dark lips of the girl her shining row of white teeth. At length, he ventured one day to enter, and was quite surprised to find that she could speak French like everyone else. The bottle of lemonade, of which she was good enough to accept a glassful, remained in the soldier's recollection memorably delicious; and it became habitual with him to come and absorb in this little tavern on the quay all the agreeable drinks which he could afford.

For him it was a treat, a happiness, on which his thoughts were constantly dwelling, to watch the black hand of the little maid pouring out something into his glass while her teeth, brighter than her eyes, showed themselves as she laughed. When they had kept company in this way for two months, they became fast friends, and Boitelle, after his first astonishment at discovering that this negress was in principle as good as the best girls in the country, that she exhibited a regard for economy, industry, religion, and good conduct, loved her more on that account, and became so much smitten with her that he wanted to marry her.

He told her about his intentions, which made her dance with joy. Besides, she had a little money, left her by a female oyster-dealer, who had picked her up when she had been left on the quay at Havre by an American captain. This captain had found her, when she was only about six years old, lying on bales of cotton in the hold of his ship,

some hours after his departure from New York. On his arrival in Havre, he there abandoned to the care of this compassionate oyster-dealer the little black creature, who had been hidden on board his vessel, he could not tell how or why.

The oyster-woman having died, the young negress became a servant at the Colonial tavern.

Antoine Boitelle added: "This will be all right if my parents don't go against it. I will never go against them, you understand—never! I'm going to say a word or two to them the first time I go back to the country."

On the following week, in fact, having obtained twenty-four hours' leave, he went to see his family, who cultivated a little farm at Tourteville near Yvetot.

He waited till the meal was finished, the hour when the coffee baptized with brandy makes people more open-hearted, before informing his parents that he had found a girl answering so well to his likings in every way that there could not exist any other in all the world so perfectly suited to him.

The old people, at this observation, immediately assumed a circumspect air, and wanted explanations. At first he concealed nothing from them except the color of her skin.

She was a servant, without much means, but strong, thrifty, clean, well-conducted, and sensible. All these were better than money would be in the hands of a bad housewife. Moreover, she had a few sous, left her by a woman who had reared her,—a good number of sous, almost a little dowry,—fifteen hundred francs in the savings' bank. The old people, overcome by his talk, and relying, too, on their own judg-

ment, were gradually giving way, when he came to the delicate point. Laughing in rather a constrained fashion, he said:

"There's only one thing you may not like. She is not white."

They did not understand, and he had to explain at some length and very cautiously, to avoid shocking them, that she belonged to the dusky race of which they had only seen samples among figures exhibited at Epinal. Then, they became restless, perplexed, alarmed, as if he had proposed a union with the Devil.

The mother said: "Black? How much of her is black? Is it the whole of her?"

He replied: "Certainly. Everywhere, just as you are white everywhere."

The father interposed: "Black? Is it as black as the pot?"

The son answered: "Perhaps a little less than that. She is black, but not disgustingly black. The curé's cassock is black; but it is not uglier than a surplice, white is white."

The father said: "Are there more black people besides her in her country?"

And the son, with an air of conviction, exclaimed: "Certainly!"

But the old man shook his head: "This must be disagreeable!"

Said the son: "It isn't more disagreeable than anything else, seeing that you get used to it in no time."

The mother asked: "It doesn't soil linen more than other skins, this black skin?"

"Not more than your own, as it is her proper color."

Then, after many other questions, it was agreed that the parents should see this girl before coming to any decision

and that the young fellow, whose period of service was coming to an end in the course of a month, should bring her to the house in order that they might examine her, and decide by talking the matter over whether or not she was too dark to enter the Boitelle family.

Antoine accordingly announced that on Sunday, the twenty-second of May, the day of his discharge, he would start for Tourteville with his sweetheart.

She had put on, for this journey to the house of her lover's parents, her most beautiful and most gaudy clothes, in which yellow, red, and blue were the prevailing colors, so that she had the appearance of one adorned for a national *fête*.

At the terminus, as they were leaving Havre, people stared at her very much, and Boitelle was proud of giving his arm to a person who commanded so much attention. Then, in the third-class carriage, in which she took a seat by his side, she excited so much astonishment among the peasants that the people in the adjoining compartments got up on their benches to get a look at her over the wooden partition which divided the different portions of the carriage from one another. A child, at sight of her, began to cry with terror, another concealed his face in his mother's apron. Everything went off well, however, up to their arrival at their destination. But, when the train slackened its rate of motion as they drew near Yvetot, Antoine felt ill at ease, as he would have done at an inspection when he did not know his drill-practice. Then, as he put his head out through the carriage door, he recognized, some distance away, his father, who was holding the bridle of

the horse yoked to a carriage, and his mother who had made her way to the railed portion of the platform where a number of spectators had gathered.

He stepped out first, gave his hand to his sweetheart, and holding himself erect, as if he were escorting a general, he advanced toward his family.

The mother, on seeing this black lady, in variegated costume in her son's company, remained so stupefied that she could not open her mouth; and the father found it hard to hold the horse, which the engine or the negress caused to rear for some time without stopping. But Antoine, suddenly seized with the unmingled joy of seeing once more the old people, rushed forward with open arms, embraced his mother, embraced his father, in spite of the nag's fright, and then turning toward his companion, at whom the passengers on the platform stopped to stare with amazement, he proceeded to explain:

"Here she is! I told you that, at first sight, she seems odd; but as soon as you know her, in very truth, there's not a better sort in the whole world. Say good morrow to her without making any bother about it."

Thereupon, Mère Boitelle, herself nearly frightened out of her wits, made a sort of courtesy, while the father took off his cap, murmuring: "I wish you good luck!"

Then, without further delay, they climbed up on the car, the two women at the lower end on seats, which made them jump up and down as the vehicle went jolting along the road, and the two men outside on the front seat.

Nobody spoke. Antoine, ill at ease, whistled a barrack-room air; his father

lashed the nag; and his mother, from where she sat in the corner, kept casting sly glances at the negress, whose forehead and cheek-bones shone in the sunlight like well-blackened shoes.

Wishing to break the ice, Antoine turned round.

"Well," said he, "we don't seem inclined to talk."

"We must get time," replied the old woman.

He went on:

"Come! tell us the little story about that hen of yours that laid eight eggs."

It was a funny anecdote of long standing in the family. But, as his mother still remained silent, paralyzed by emotion, he started the talking himself and narrated, with much laughter on his own part, this memorable adventure. The father, who knew it by heart, brightened up at the opening words of the narrative; his wife soon followed his example; and the negress herself, when he had reached the drollest part of it, suddenly gave vent to a laugh so noisy, rolling, and torrentlike that the horse, becoming excited, broke into a gallop for a little while.

This served as the introduction to their acquaintanceship. The company at length began to chat.

On reaching the house they all alighted, and he conducted his sweetheart to a room so that she might take off her dress, to avoid staining it while preparing a good dish intended to win the old people's affections by appealing to their stomachs. Then he drew his parents aside near the door, and with beating heart, asked:

"Well, what do you say now?"

The father said nothing. The mother, less timid, exclaimed:

"She is too black. No, indeed, this is too much for me. It turns my blood."

"That may be, but it is only for the moment."

They then made their way into the interior of the house where the good woman was somewhat affected at the spectacle of the negress engaged in cooking. She at once proceeded to assist her, with petticoats tucked up, active in spite of her age.

The meal was an excellent one—very long, very enjoyable. When they had afterward taken a turn together, Antoine said to his father:

"Well, dad, what do you say to this?"

The peasant took care never to compromise himself.

"I have no opinion about it. Ask your mother."

So Antoine went back to his mother, and, leading her to the end of the room, said:

"Well, mother, what do you think of her?"

"My poor lad, she is really too black. If she were only a little less black, I would not go against you, but this is too much. One would think it was Satan!"

He did not press her, knowing how obstinate the old woman had always been, but he felt a tempest of disappointment sweeping over his heart. He was turning over in his mind what he ought to do, what plan he could devise, surprised, moreover, that she had not conquered them already as she had captivated himself. And they all four set out with slow steps through the corn-

fields, having again relapsed into silence. Whenever they passed a fence, they saw a countryman sitting on the stile and a group of brats climbing up to stare at them. People rushed out into the road to see the "black" whom young Boitelle had brought home with him. At a distance they noticed people scampering across the fields as they do when the drum beats to draw public attention to some living phenomenon. Père and Mère Boitelle, scared by this curiosity, which was exhibited everywhere through the country at their approach, quickened their pace, walking side by side, leaving far behind their son, whom his dark companion asked what his parents thought of her.

He hesitatingly replied that they had not yet made up their minds.

But on the village-green, people rushed out of all the houses in a flutter of excitement; and, at the sight of the gathering rabble, old Boitelle took to his heels, and regained his abode, while Antoine, swelling with rage, his sweetheart on his arm, advanced majestically under the battery of staring eyes opened wide in amazement.

He understood that it was at an end, that there was no hope for him, that he could not marry his negress. She also understood it; and as they drew near the farmhouse they both began to weep. As soon as they had got back to the house, she once more took off her dress to aid the mother in her household duties, and followed her everywhere, to the dairy, to the stable, to the henhouse, taking on herself the hardest part of the work, repeating always, "Let me do it, Madame Boitelle," so that, when night

came on, the old woman, touched but inexorable, said to her son: "She is a good girl, all the same. 'Tis a pity she is so black; but indeed she is too much so. I couldn't get used to it. She must go back again. She is too black!"

And young Boitelle said to his sweetheart:

"She will not consent. She thinks you are too black. You must go back again. I will go with you to the train. No matter—don't fret. I am going to talk to them after you have started."

He then conducted her to the railway-station, still cheering her up with hope, and, when he had kissed her, he put her into the train, which he watched as it passed out of sight, his eyes swollen with tears. In vain did he appeal to the

old people. They would not give their consent.

And when he had told this story, which was known all over the country, Antoine Boitelle would always add:

"From that time forward I have had no heart for anything—for anything at all. No trade suited me any longer, and so I became what I am—a night-cartman."

People would say to him: "Yet you got married."

"Yes, and I can't say that my wife didn't please me, seeing that I've got fourteen children; but she is not the other one, oh! no—certainly not! The other one, mark you, my negress, she had only to give me one glance and I felt as if I were in Heaven!"

Selfishness

WE READ lately in the journals, the following lines:

"BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, January 22.

"A frightful disaster has occurred which throws into consternation our maritime population, so grievously afflicted two years since. The fishing boat, commanded by shipmaster Javel, entering into port, was carried to the west, and broken upon the rocks of the breakwater near the pier. In spite of the efforts of the salvage boat, and of life lines shot out to them, four men and a cabin boy perished. The bad weather continues. We fear new calamities."

Who is this shipmaster Javel? Is he the brother of the one-armed Javel? If this poor man tossed by the waves, and

dead perhaps, under the *débris* of his boat cut in pieces, is the one I think he is, he assisted, eighteen years ago, at another drama, terrible and simple as are all the formidable dramas of the billows.

Javel the elder was then master of a smack. The smack is the fishing boat *par excellence*. Solid, fearing no kind of weather, with round body, rolled incessantly by the waves, like a cork, always lashed by the hard, foul winds of the Channel, it travels the sea indefatigably, with sail filled, making in its wake a path which reaches the bottom of the ocean, detaching all the sleeping creatures from the rocks, the flat fishes glued to the sand, the heavy crabs with their hooked claws, and the

lobster with his pointed mustaches.

When the breeze is fresh and the waves choppy, the boat puts about to fish. A rope is fastened to the end of a great wooden shank tipped with iron, which is let down by means of two cables slipping over two spools at the extreme end of the craft. And the boat, driving under wind and current, drags after her this apparatus, which ravages and devastates the bottom of the sea.

Javel had on board his younger brother, four men, and a cabin boy. He had set out from Boulogne in fair weather to cast the nets. Then, suddenly, the wind arose and an unlooked-for squall forced the boat along over the waters. It gained the coast of England; but a tremendous sea beat so against the cliffs and the shore that it was impossible to enter port. The little boat put to sea again and returned to the coast of France. The tempest continued to make the piers unapproachable, enveloping them with foam, and shutting off all places of refuge by noise and danger.

The fishing boat set out again, running under the billows, tossed about, shaken up, suffocated in mountains of water, but merry in spite of all, accustomed to heavy weather, which sometimes held it for five or six hours between the two countries, unable to land in the one or the other.

Finally, the hurricane ceased, when they came out into open sea, and although the sea was still high, the commander ordered them to cast the net. Then the great fishing tackle was thrown overboard, and two men at one side and two at the other begin to unwind from rollers the cable which holds it. Sud-

denly it touches the bottom, but a high wave tips the boat. Javel the younger, who is in the prow directing the casting of the net, totters, and finds his arm caught between the cable, stopped an instant by the motion, and the wood on which it slipped. He made a desperate effort with his other hand to lift the cable, but the net already dragged and the rapidly slipping cable would not yield.

Faint from pain, he called. All ran to him. His brother left the helm. They threw their full force upon the rope, forcing it away from the arm it was grinding. It was in vain. "We must cut it," said a sailor, and he drew from his pocket a large knife which could, in two blows, save young Javel's arm. But to cut was to lose the net, and the net meant money, much money—five hundred francs; it belonged to the elder Javel, who held to his property.

With tortured heart he cried out: "No, don't cut; I'll luff the ship." And he ran to the wheel, putting the helm about. The boat scarcely obeyed, paralyzed by the net which counteracted its power, and dragged besides from the force of the leeway and the wind.

Young Javel fell to his knees with set teeth and haggard eyes. He said nothing. His brother returned, fearing the sailor's cutting.

"Wait! wait!" he said, "don't cut, we must cast anchor."

The anchor was thrown overboard, all the chain paid out, and they then tried to take a turn around the capstan with the cables in order to loosen the strain from the weight of the net. They were successful, finally, and released the arm

which hung inert under a sleeve of bloody woolen cloth.

Young Javel was nearly beside himself. They removed the covering from his arm, and then saw something horrible; bruised flesh, from which the blood spurted in waves, as if it were forced by a pump. The man himself looked at his arm and murmured: "Fool!"

Then, as the hemorrhage made a river on the deck of the boat, the sailors cried: "He'll lose all his blood. We must bind the vein!"

They then took a rope, a great, black, tarred rope and, twisting it around the member above the wound, bound it with all their strength. Little by little the jets of blood stopped, and finally ceased altogether.

Young Javel arose, his arm hanging by his side. He took it by the other hand, raised it, turned it, shook it. Everything was broken; the bones were crushed completely; only the muscles held it to his body. He looked at it with sad eyes, as if reflecting. Then he seated himself on a folded sail, and his comrades came around him, advising him to soak it continually to prevent its turning black.

They put a bucket near him and, from minute to minute, he would pour water from a glass upon the horrible wound, leaving a thread of color in the clear water.

"You would be better down below," said his brother. He went down, but at the end of an hour came up again, feeling better not to be alone. And then, he preferred the open air. He sat down again upon the sail and continued bathing his arm.

The fishing was good. Large fishes

with white bodies were lying beside him, shaken by the spasms of death. He looked at them without ceasing to sprinkle his mangled flesh.

When they started to return to Boulogne, another gale of wind prevented. The little boat began again its mad course, bounding, tumbling, shaking sadly the wounded man.

The night came. The weather was heavy until daybreak. At sunrise, they could see England again, but as the sea was a little less rough, they turned toward France, beating in the wind.

Toward evening, young Javel called his comrades and showed them black traces and a villainous look of decay around that part of his arm which was no longer joined to his body.

The sailors looked at it, giving advice: "That must be gangrene," said one.

"It must have salt water on it," said another.

Then they brought salt water and poured it on the wound. The wounded man became livid, grinding his teeth, and twisting with pain; but he uttered no cry.

When the burning grew less, he said to his brother: "Give me your knife." The brother gave it to him.

"Hold this arm up for me, drawn out straight."

His brother did as he was asked.

Then he began to cut. He cut gently, with caution, severing the last tendons with the sharp blade as one would a thread with a razor. Soon he had only a stump. He fetched a deep sigh and said: "That had to be done. Fool!"

He seemed relieved and breathed with force. He continued to pour water on

the part of his arm remaining to him.

The night was still bad and they could not land. When the day appeared, young Javel took his detached arm and examined it carefully. Putrefaction had begun. The comrades came also and examined it, passing it from hand to hand, touching it, turning it over, and smelling it.

His brother said: "It's about time to throw that into the sea."

Young Javel was angry, he replied: "No, oh! no! I will not. It is mine, isn't it? Worse still, it is my arm." He took it and held it between his legs.

"It won't grow any less putrid," said the elder.

Then an idea came to the wounded man. In order to keep the fish which they kept out a long time, they had with them barrels of salt. "Couldn't I put it in there in the brine?" he asked.

"That's so," declared the others.

Then they emptied one of the barrels, already full of fish from the last few days, and, at the bottom, they deposited the arm. Then they turned salt upon it and replaced the fishes, one by one.

One of the sailors made a little joke: "Perhaps I could sell it, if I cried it around town."

And everybody laughed except the Javel brothers.

The wind still blew. They beat about in sight of Boulogne until the next day at ten o'clock. The wounded man still poured water on his arm. From time to

time he would get up and walk from one end of the boat to the other. His brother, who was at the wheel, shook his head and followed him with his eye.

Finally, they came into port.

The doctor examined the wound and declared it in good shape. He dressed it perfectly and ordered rest. But Javel could not go to bed without seeing his arm again, and went quickly back to the dock to find the barrel which he had marked with a cross.

They emptied it before him, and he found his arm refreshed, well preserved in the salt. He wrapped it in a napkin brought for this purpose, and took it home.

His wife and children examined carefully this fragment of their father, touching the fingers, taking up the grains of salt that had lodged under the nails. Then they went to the joiner for a little coffin.

The next day a complete procession of the crew of the fishing smack followed the detached arm to its interment. The two brothers, side by side, conducted the ceremony. The parish priest held the coffin under his arm.

Javel the younger gave up going to sea. He obtained a small position in port, and, later, whenever he spoke of the accident, he would say to his auditor, in a low tone: "If my brother had been willing to cut the cable, I should still have my arm, be sure. But he was looking to his own pocket."

VOLUME IX

The Watchdog

MADAME LEFEVRE was a country woman, a widow, one of those half peasants with ribbons and furbelows on her cap, a person who spoke with some care, taking on grandiose airs in public, and concealing a pretentious, brute soul under an exterior comically glossed over, as she concealed her great red hands under gloves of ecru silk.

She had for a servant a simple, rustic, named Rose. The two women lived in a little house with green shutters, on a highway in Normandy, in the center of the country of Caux. As there was a garden spot in front of the house, they cultivated some vegetables.

One night, some one robbed them of a dozen onions. When Rose perceived the larceny, she ran to tell Madame, who came down in a wool petticoat. Here was a sorrow, and a terror, besides! Some one had robbed, robbed Madame Lefevre! And when a robber visits one in the country, he may come again.

And the two frightened women studied the footprints, prattled, and supposed certain things:

"Here," they would say, "they must have passed here. They must have put their foot on the wall and then leaped into the flower bed."

And they trembled for the future. How could they sleep peacefully now?

The news of the robbery spread. The neighbors arrived to prove and discuss the matter, each in his turn. To each newcomer the two women explained their observations and their ideas. A farmer on the other side of them said:

"You ought to keep a dog."

That was true, that was; they ought to keep a dog, even if it were good for

nothing but to give an alarm. Not a big dog, Monsieur! What would they do with a big dog? It would ruin them to feed it! But a little dog, a little puppy that could yap.

When everybody was gone, Madame Lefevre discussed this idea of having a dog for a long time. After reflection, she made a thousand objections, terrified at the thought of a bowlful of porridge. Because she was of that race of parsimonious country dames who always carry pennies in their pockets, in order to give alms ostensibly along the street, and to the contributions on Sunday.

Rose, who loved animals, brought forward her reasons and defended them with astuteness. And finally, it was decided that they should have a dog, but a little dog.

They began to look for one, but could only find big ones, swallows of food enough to make one tremble. The Rolleville grocer had one, very small; but he asked two francs for him, to cover the expense of bringing him up. Madame Lefevre declared that she was willing to feed a dog, but she never would buy one.

Then the baker, who knew the circumstances, brought them, one morning, a little, yellow animal, nearly all paws, with the body of a crocodile, the head of a fox, a tail, trumpet-shaped, a regular plume, large like the rest of his person. Madame Lefevre found this cur that cost nothing very beautiful. Rose embraced it, and then asked its name. The baker said it was, "Pierrot."

He was installed in an old soap box, and he was given first, a drink of water.

He drank. Then they gave him a piece of bread. He ate.

Madame Lefevre, somewhat disturbed, had one idea:

"When he gets accustomed to the house, we can let him run loose. He will find something to eat in roaming around the country."

In fact, they did let him run, but it did not prevent him from being famished. Besides, he only barked to ask for his pittance, in which case, he did indeed bark with fury.

Anybody could enter the garden. Pierrot would go and caress each newcomer, remaining absolutely mute. Nevertheless, Madame Lefevre became accustomed to the beast. She even came to love it, and to give it from her hand, sometimes, pieces of bread dipped in the sauce from her meat.

But she had never dreamed of a tax, and when they came to her for eight francs—eight francs, Madame!—for this little cur of a dog, that would not even bark, she almost fainted from shock. It was immediately decided that they must get rid of Pierrot. No one wanted him. All the inhabitants, for ten miles around, refused him. Then it was resolved that, by some means, they must make him acquainted with the little house. Now, to be acquainted with the little house is to eat of the chalk pit. They make all dogs acquainted with the little house when they wish to get rid of them.

In the midst of a vast plain, there appeared a kind of hut, or rather, the little roof of a cottage, rising above the sod. It is the entrance to the marlpit. One great shaft went down about twenty meters, where it was met by a series of long galleries, penetrating the mine.

Once a year they descended in a sort of carriage and marled the clay. All the rest of the time, the pit serves as a cemetery for condemned dogs; and often, when one passes near the mouth, there comes to his ears plaintive howls, furious barking, and lamentable appeals.

Hunting and shepherd dogs flee with fright at the first sound of these noises; and when one stoops down above this opening, he finds an abominable odor of putrefaction. Frightful dramas have taken place within the bounds of this shadow.

When a beast suffers from hunger at the bottom of the pit for ten or twelve days, nourished only on the remains of his predecessors, sometimes a new animal, larger and more vigorous, is suddenly thrown in. There they are, alone, famished, their eyes glittering. They watch each other, follow each other, hesitate anxiously. But hunger presses; they attack each other, struggling a long time infuriated; and the strong eats the weak, devouring him alive.

When it was decided that they would get rid of Pierrot, they looked about them for an executioner. The laborer who was digging in the road, demanded six sous for the trouble. This appeared exaggerated folly to Madame Lefevre. A neighbor's boy would be content with five sous; that was still too much. Then Rose observed that it would be better for them to take him themselves, because he would not then be tortured on the way and warned of his lot; and so it was decided that they go together at nightfall.

They gave him, this evening, a good soup with a bit of butter in it. He swallowed it to the last drop. And when

he wagged his tail with contentment, Rose took him in her apron.

They went at a great pace, like marauders, across the plain. As soon as they reached the pit, Madame Lefevre stooped to listen; she wanted to know if any other beast was howling in there. No, there was no sound. Pierrot would be alone. And Rose, who was weeping, embraced him, then threw him in the hole. And they stooped, both of them, and listened.

They heard first a heavy thud; then the sharp, broken cry of a wounded beast; then a succession of imploring supplications, the head raised to the opening.

He yapped, oh! how he yapped!

They were seized with remorse, with a foolish, inexplicable fear. They jumped up and ran away. And, as Rose ran more quickly, Madame Lefevre would cry: "Wait, Rose, wait for me!"

Their night was filled with frightful nightmares. Madame Lefevre dreamed that she seated herself at the table to eat soup, and when she uncovered the tureen, Pierrot was in it. He darted out and bit her on the nose. She awoke and thought she heard the barking still; she listened; she was deceived. Again she slept, and found herself upon a great road, an interminable road, that she must follow. Suddenly, in the middle of the road, she perceived a basket, a great, farmer's basket, a basket that brought her fear. Nevertheless, she finished by opening it, and Pierrot, hidden within, seized her hand, not loosing it again. And she knew that she was lost, carrying about forever suspended upon her arm, a dog with open mouth.

At the dawn of day, she arose, almost insane, and ran to the pit.

He was barking, barking still; he had barked all night. She began to sob and called him with a thousand caressing names. He responded with all the tender inflections a dog's voice is capable of. Then she wished to see him again, promising herself to make him happy to the day of her death. She ran to the house of the man in charge of the mine, and told him her story. The man listened without laughing. When she had finished, he said: "You want your dog? That will be four francs."

It was a shock. All her grief vanished at a blow.

"Four francs," said she, "Four francs! would you make a murderer of yourself!"

He replied: "You believe that I am going to bring my ropes and tackle and set them up, and go down there with my boy and get bitten, perhaps, by your mad dog, for the pleasure of giving him back to you? You shouldn't have thrown him in there!"

She went away indignant. "Four francs!"

As soon as she entered, she called Rose and told her the demands of the miner. Rose, always resigned, answered: "Four francs! It is considerable money, Madame." Then she added that they might throw the poor dog something to eat, so that it might not die there.

Madame Lefevre approved galdly, and again they set out with a big piece of bread and butter. They broke off morsels, which they threw in one after the other, calling in turn to Pierrot. And as soon as the dog had got one piece, he barked for the next.

They returned that evening, then the next day, every day. But never more than one journey.

One morning, at the moment they dropped the first morsel, they heard suddenly, a formidable barking in the shaft. There were two of them! Another dog had been thrown in, a big dog!

Rose cried: "Pierrot!" And Pierrot answered: "Yap, Yap!" Then they began to feed him, but each time they threw down a bit, they heard a terrible tussle, then the plaintive cries of Pierrot bitten by his companion, who ate all, being the stronger.

Then they specified: "This is for you Pierrot!" Pierrot evidently got nothing.

The two women, amazed, looked at each other. And Madame Lefevre declared in a sharp voice:

"I certainly can't feed all the dogs they throw in there. We must give it up."

Overcome with the idea of all those dogs living at her expense, she went away, carrying even the bread that she had begun to feed to poor Pierrot.

Rose followed, wiping her eyes on the corner of her blue apron.

The Dancers

"GREAT misfortunes grieve me little," said John Bridelle, an old bachelor who passed for a sceptic. "I have seen war at close range; I could stride over dead bodies pitilessly. The strong brutalities of nature, where we can utter cries of horror or indignation, do not wring our hearts or send the shiver down the back, as do the little wondering sights of life.

"Certainly the most violent grief that one can experience is for a mother the loss of a child, and for a son the loss of a mother. It is violent and terrible, it overturns and lacerates; but one is healed of such catastrophes, as of large, bleeding wounds. But, certain accidents, certain things hinted at, suspected, certain secret griefs, certain perfidy, of the sort that stirs up in us a world of grievous thoughts, which opens before us suddenly the mysterious door of moral suffering, complicated, incurable, so

much the more profound because it seems worthy, so much the more stinging because unseizable, the more tenacious because artificial, these leave upon the soul a train of sadness, a feeling of sorrow, a sensation of disenchantment that we are long in ridding ourselves of.

"I have ever before my eyes two or three things, that possibly had not been noticed by others, but which entered into my sympathies like deep, unhealable stings.

"You will not comprehend, perhaps, the emotion that has relieved me from these rapid impressions. I will tell you only one. It is old, but lives with me as if it occurred yesterday. It may be imagination alone that keeps it fresh in my memory.

"I am fifty years old. I was young then and studious by nature. A little sad, a little dreamy, impregnated with

a melancholy philosophy, I never cared much for the brilliant *cafés*, noisy comrades, nor stupid girls. I rose early, and one of my sweetest indulgences was to take a walk alone, about eight o'clock in the morning, in the nursery of the Luxemburg.

"Perhaps you do not know this nursery? It was like a forgotten garden of another century, a pretty garden, like the smile of an old person. Trimmed hedges separated the straight, regular walks, calm walks between two walls of foliage neatly pruned. The great scissors of the gardener clipped without mercy the offshoots of the branches. While here and there were walks bordered with flowers, and clumps of little trees, arranged like collegians promenading, masses of magnificent roses, and regiments of fruit-trees.

"The whole of one corner of this delightful copse was inhabited by bees. Their straw houses, skillfully spaced upon the planks, opened to the sun their great odors, like the opening of a sewing thimble. And all along the path golden flies were buzzing, true mistresses of this peaceful place, ideal inhabitants of these walks and corridors.

"I went there nearly every morning. I would seat myself upon a bench and read. Sometimes, I would allow my book to fall upon my knees, while I dreamed and listened to the living Paris all about me, and enjoyed the infinite repose of these rows of ancient oaks.

"All at once I perceived that I was not alone a frequenter of this spot, reached through an opening in the fence. From time to time I encountered, face to face, an old man in the corner of the thicket. He wore shoes with silver

buckles, trousers with a flap, a tobacco-colored coat, lace in place of a cravat, and an unheard-of hat with nap and edges worn, which made one think of the deluge.

"He was thin, very thin, angular, smiling, grimacing. His bright eyes sparkled, agitated by a continual movement of the pupils; and he always carried a superb cane, with a gold head, which must have been a souvenir, and a magnificent one.

"This good man astonished me at first, then interested me beyond measure. And I watched him behind a wall of foliage, and followed him from afar, stopping behind shrubbery, so as not to be seen.

"It happened one morning as he believed himself entirely alone, that he began some singular movements; some little bounds at first, then a bow; then he struck up some capers with his lank legs, then turned cleverly, as if on a pivot, bending and swaying in a droll fashion, smiling as if before the public, making gestures with outstretched arms, twisting his poor body like a jumping-jack, throwing tender, ridiculous salutations to the open air. He was dancing!

"I remained petrified with amazement, asking myself which of the two was mad, he or I. But he stopped suddenly, advanced as actors do upon the stage, bowed, and took a few steps backward, with the gracious smiles and kisses of the comedian, which he threw with trembling hand to the two rows of shapely trees.

"After that, he resumed his walk with gravity.

"From this day, I never lost sight of

him. And each morning he recommenced his peculiar exercise.

"A foolish desire led me to speak to him. I ventured and, having bowed, I said:

" 'It is a fine day, to-day, sir.'

"He bowed. 'Yes, sir, it is like the weather of long ago.'

"A week after this, we were friends, and I knew his history. He had been dancing master at the Opera from the time of Louis XV. His beautiful cane was a gift from Count de Clermont. And when he began to speak of dancing, he never knew when to stop.

"One day he confided in me:

" 'I married La Castris, sir. I will present her to you, if you wish, but she never comes here so early. This garden, you see, is our pleasure and our life. It is all that remains to us of former times. It seems to us that we could not exist if we did not have it. It is old and distinguished, is it not? Here I can seem to breathe air that has not changed since my youth. My wife and I pass every afternoon here. But I, I come again in the morning, because I rise so early.'

"After luncheon, I returned to the Luxemburg, and soon I perceived my friend, who was giving his arm with great ceremony to a little old woman clothed in black, to whom I was presented. It was La Castris, the great dancer, loved of princes, loved of the king, loved of all that gallant century which seems to have left in the world an odor of love.

"We seated ourselves upon a bench. It was in the month of May. A perfume of flowers flitted through all the tidy walks; a pleasant sun glistened between

the leaves and spread over us large spots of light. The black robe of La Castris seemed all permeated with brightness.

"The garden was empty. The roll of carriages could be heard in the distance.

" 'Will you explain to me,' said I to the old dancing master, 'what the minuet was?'

"He started. 'The minuet, sir, is the queen of dances and the dance of queens, do you understand? Since there are no more kings, there are no more minuets.'

"And he commenced, in pompous style, a long, dithyrambic eulogy of which I comprehended nothing. I wanted him to describe the step to me, all the movements, the poses. He perplexed and exasperated himself with his lack of strength, and then became nervous and spent. Then, suddenly, turning toward his old companion, always silent and grave, he said:

" 'Elise, will you, I say—will you be so kind as to show this gentleman what the minuet really was?'

"She turned her unquiet eyes in every direction, then rising, without a word, placed herself opposite him.

"Then I saw something never to be forgotten.

"They went forward and back with a child-like apishness, smiling to each other and balancing, bowing and hopping like two old puppets made to dance by some ancient mechanism, a little out of repair, and constructed long ago by some skillful workman following the custom of his day.

"And I looked at them, my heart troubled with extraordinary sensations, my soul moved by an indescribable

melancholy. I seemed to see a lamentable, comic apparition, the shadow of a century past and gone. I had a desire to laugh when I felt more like weeping.

"Then they stopped; they had ended the figure of the dance. For some seconds they remained standing before each other, smirking in a most surprising manner; then they embraced each other with a sob.

"I left town three days later for the provinces. I have never seen them again. When I returned to Paris, two years later, they had destroyed the nursery garden. What have the old

couple done without the dear garden of other days, with its labyrinths, its odor of long ago, and its walks shaded by graceful elms? Are they dead? Are they wandering through modern streets, like exiles without hope? Are they dancing somewhere, grotesque specters, a fantastic minuet among the cypresses in the cemetery, along the paths beside the tombs, in the moonlight?

"The remembrance haunts me, oppresses and tortures me; it remains with me like a wound. Why? I cannot tell.

"You will find this very ridiculous, without doubt."

Christening

"COME, doctor, a little more cognac."
 "With pleasure." The old navy doctor watched the golden liquid flow into his glass, held it up to the light, took a sip and kept it in his mouth a long while before swallowing it, and said:

"What a delicious poison! I should say, what a captivating destroyer of humanity! You do not know it as I know it. You may have read that remarkable book called 'L'Assommoir,' but you have not seen a whole tribe of savages exterminated by this same poison. I have seen with my own eyes a strange and terrible drama, which was the result of too much alcohol. It happened not very far from here, in a little village near Pont-l'abbé in Brittany. I was on a vacation and was living in the little country house which my father had left me. You all know that wild country surrounded by the sea—that wicked sea,

always lying in wait for some new victim! The poor fishermen go out day and night in their little boats and the wicked sea upsets their boats and swallows them! Fearlessly they go out, yet feeling uneasy as to their safety, but half of the time they are intoxicated. 'When the bottle is full we feel safe, but when it is empty we feel lost'; they say. If you got into their huts, you will never find the father and if you ask the woman what has become of her man, she will answer pointing to the raging sea: 'He stayed there one night, when he had too much drink and my eldest son too.' She has still four strong boys; it will be their turn soon!

"Well, as I have said, I was living at my little country house with one servant, an old sailor, and the Breton family who took care of the place during my absence, which consisted of two

sisters and the husband of one of them, who was also my gardener.

"Toward Christmas of that year, the gardener's wife gave birth to a boy and he asked me to be godfather. I could not very well refuse, and on the strength of it he borrowed ten francs from me, 'for the church expenses,' he said.

"The christening was to take place on the second of January. For the past week the ground had been covered with snow and it was bitter cold. At nine o'clock of the morning designated, Kerandec and his sister-in-law arrived in front of my door, with a nurse carrying the baby wrapped up in a blanket, and we started for the church. The cold was terrific and I wondered how the poor little child could stand such cold. These Bretons must be made of iron, I thought, if they can stand going out in such weather at their birth!

"When we arrived at the church the door was closed. The priest had not come yet. The nurse sat on the steps and began to undress the child. I thought at first that she only wanted to arrange his clothes, but to my horror I saw that she was taking every stitch of clothing off his back! I was horrified at such imprudence and I went toward her saying:

"'What in the world are you doing? Are you crazy? Do you want to kill him?'

"'Oh, no, master,' she answered placidly, 'but he must present himself before God naked.' His father and aunt looked on calmly. It was the custom in Brittany and if they had not done this they said, something would happen to the child.

"I got furiously angry. I called the

father all kinds of names; I threatened to leave them and tried to cover the child by force, but in vain. The nurse ran away from me with the poor little naked body, which was fast becoming blue with the biting cold. I had made up my mind to leave these brutes to their ignorance, when I saw the priest coming along followed by the sexton and an altar boy. I ran toward him and told him in a few words what these brutes had done, but he was not a bit surprised; nor did he hurry.

"'What can I do, my dear sir? It is the custom, they all do it.'

"'But for goodness sake hurry up,' I cried impatiently.

"'I cannot go any faster,' he answered, and at last he entered the vestry. We waited outside the church-door and I suffered terribly at hearing that poor little wretch crying with pain. At last the door opened and we went in, but the child had to remain naked during the whole ceremony. It seemed to me as if it would never come to an end. The priest crawled along like a turtle, muttered his Latin words slowly, as if he took pleasure in torturing the poor little baby. At last, the torture came to an end and the nurse wrapped the child in his blanket again. By that time the poor little thing was chilled through and was crying piteously.

"'Will you come in and sign your name to the register?' asked the priest.

"I turned to the gardener and urged him to go home immediately and warm the child up, so as to avoid pneumonia if there was still time. He promised to follow my advice, and left with his sister-in-law and the nurse. I followed the priest into the vestry, and when I

had signed the register, he demanded five francs. As I had given ten francs to the father, I refused. The priest threatened to tear up the certificate and to annul the ceremony, and I, in my turn, threatened to prosecute him. We quarreled for a long time, but at last I paid the five francs.

"As soon as I got home, I ran to Kerandec's house, but neither he, nor his sister-in-law or the nurse had come home. The mother was in bed shivering with cold and she was hungry, not having eaten anything since the day before.

"Where on earth did they go?" I asked. She did not seem the least bit surprised and answered calmly:

"They went to have a drink in honor of the christening.' That also was the custom and I thought of my ten francs which I had given the father, and which would pay for the drinks no doubt. I sent some beef-tea to the mother and had a good fire made in her room. I was so angry at those brutes that I made up my mind to discharge them when they came back; but what worried me most was the poor little baby. What would become of him?

"At six o'clock they had not come back. I ordered my servant to wait for them and I went to bed.

"I slept soundly, as a sailor will sleep, until daybreak and did not wake until my servant brought me some hot water. As soon as I opened my eyes I asked

him about Kerandec. The old sailor hesitated, then finally answered:

"He came home past midnight as drunk as a fool; the Kermagan woman and the nurse too. I think they slept in a ditch, and the poor little baby died without their even noticing it.'

"Dead!' I cried jumping to my feet.

"Yes, sir, they brought it to the mother, and when she saw it she cried terribly, but they made her drink to forget her sorrow.'

"What do you mean by "they made her drink?"'

"This, sir. I only found out this morning. Kerandec had no more liquor and no more money to buy any, so he took the wood alcohol that you gave him for the lamp and they drank that until they had finished the bottle and now the Kerandec woman is very sick.'

"I dressed in haste, seized a cane with the firm intention of chastising those human brutes and ran to the gardener's house. The mother lay helpless, dying from the effects of the alcohol, with the discolored corpse of her baby lying near her, while Kerandec and the Kermagan woman lay snoring on the floor.

"I did everything in my power to save the woman, but she died at noon."

The old doctor having concluded his narrative, took the bottle of cognac, poured out a glass for himself, and having held it up to the light, swallowed the golden liquid and smacked his lips.

A Costly Outing

HECTOR DE GRIBELIN, descendant of an old provincial family, had spent his early years in his ancestral home and had finished his studies under the guidance of an old abbé. The family was far from rich, but they kept up appearances the best way they could. At the age of twenty a position was procured for him at the Navy administration, at one thousand five hundred francs a year, but like a great many, not being prepared for the battle, his first three years of office life had been exceedingly hard.

He had renewed acquaintance with a few old friends of his family, poor like himself, but living in the secluded Faubourg St.-Germain, keeping up appearances at any cost, sacrificing everything in order to hold their rank.

It was there he had met and married a young girl, titled but penniless. Two children had blessed their union. Hector and his wife struggled constantly to make both ends meet and for the past four years they had known no other distractions than a walk on Sunday to the Champs-Élysées, and a few evenings at the theater, a friend giving them tickets.

His chief had just intrusted him with some extra work and he received the extra compensation of three hundred francs. Coming home that night he said to his wife:

"My dear Henriette, we ought to do something with this money; a little outing in the country for the children for instance."

They had a lengthy discussion, and finally decided on a family picnic.

"We have had so very few outings," said Hector, "that we may as well do things right. We will hire a rig for you and the little ones, and I will hire a horse; it will do me good."

They talked of nothing else all week. Each night, he would dance his elder son up and down on his foot and say:

"This is the way papa will ride next Sunday." And the boy would ride chairs all day screaming:

"This is papa on horseback." Even the servant marveled when she heard Hector tell of his feats on horseback when he was home and how he would ride at the side of the carriage.

"When once on a horse I am afraid of nothing," he would say. "If they could give me a frisky animal I would like it all the better. You will see how I ride, and, if you like, we can come back by the Champs-Élysées when everybody is coming home. We shall cut quite a figure, and I should not be sorry to meet some one from the office; there is nothing like it to inspire respect."

At last Sunday came. The carriage and the horse were at the door, and Hector came down immediately, holding a newly-bought riding-whip, to look the horse over. He examined him from head to foot, opened his mouth, told his age, and as the family was coming out at that moment, he discoursed on horses in general and that one in particular, which he declared to be an excellent animal.

When everyone was comfortably placed in the carriage, Hector examined the saddle, and mounting with a spring,

dropped on the horse with such force that he immediately set up a dance which almost threw his rider. Hector became flustered and tried to calm him, saying: "Come, old fellow, be quiet." And having succeeded in calming him a little he asked:

"Is everybody ready?"

Everybody said they were and the party proceeded. All eyes were turned on Hector, who affected the English seat and leaped up and down on his saddle in an exaggerated manner. He looked straight before him, contracting his brow and looking very pale. His wife and the servant each held one of the boys on their lap and every minute they would say:

"Look at papa!" And the boys, overcome with joy, uttered piercing screams.

The horse, frightened at so much noise, started off at a gallop and while Hector tried to stop him his hat fell off. The driver had to come down and pick it up, and having recovered it, Hector shouted to his wife:

"Make the children stop screaming, will you? They will make the horse run away."

They arrived at last. The baskets having been opened they lunched on the grass. Although the driver looked after the horses, Hector went every minute to see if his horse wanted anything. He patted him and fed him bread, cake, and sugar.

"He is a great trotter," he said to his wife. "He shook me at first, but you saw how quickly I subdued him. He knows his master now."

They came back by the Champs-Élysées as agreed. The weather being

beautiful, the avenue was crowded with carriages and the sidewalks lined with pedestrians. The horse, scenting the stable, suddenly took to his heels. He dashed between carriages like a whirlwind and Hector's efforts to stop him were unavailing. The carriage containing his family was far behind. In front of the Palais de l'Industrie, the horse turned to the right at a gallop. An old woman was at that moment leisurely crossing the street, and Hector, who was unable to stop the horse shouted: "Hey there, hey!" But the old woman was deaf, perhaps, for she slowly kept on until the horse struck her with such force that she turned a triple somersault and landed ten feet away. Several people shouted: "Stop him."

Hector was distracted and held on desperately to the horse's mane, crying: "Help, help!" A terrible shock sent him over the horse's head like a bomb, and he landed in the arms of a policeman who was running toward him. An angry crowd gathered. An old gentleman wearing a decoration was especially angry.

"Confound it, sir!" he said, "if you cannot ride a horse why do you not stay at home instead of running over people!"

Four men were carrying the old woman, who to all appearances was dead.

"Take this woman to a drug-store," said the old gentleman, "and let us go to the station-house."

A crowd followed Hector, who walked between two policemen, while a third led his horse. At that moment the carriage appeared, and his wife taking in the situation at a glance, ran toward him; the servant and the children came behind crying. He explained that his

horse had knocked a woman down, but it was nothing, he would be home very soon.

Arrived at the station-house, he gave his name, his place of employment, and awaited news of the injured woman. A policeman came back with the information that the woman's name was Mme. Simon, and that she was a charwoman sixty-five years old. She had regained consciousness, but she suffered internally, she claimed. When Hector found that she was not dead, he recovered his spirits and promised to defray the expenses of her illness. He went to the drug-store where they had taken the old woman. An immense crowd blocked the doorway. The old woman was whining and groaning pitifully. Two doctors were examining her.

"There are no bones broken," they said, "but we are afraid she is hurt internally."

"Do you suffer much?" asked Hector.

"Oh, yes."

"Where?"

"I feel as if my inside was on fire."

"Then you are the cause of the accident?" said a doctor approaching.

"Yes, sir," said Hector.

"This woman must go to a sanitarium. I know one where they will take her for six francs a day; shall I fix it for you?"

Hector thanked him gratefully and went home relieved. He found his wife in tears, and he comforted her saying:

"Don't worry, she is much better already. I sent her to a sanitarium, and in three days she will be all right."

After his work the next day he went to see Mme. Simon. She was eating some beef soup which she seemed to relish.

"Well," said Hector, "how do you feel?"

"No better, my poor man," she answered. "I feel as good as dead!"

The doctor advised waiting, complications might arise. He waited three days, then went to see the old woman again. Her skin was clear, her eyes bright, but as soon as she saw Hector she commenced to whine:

"I can't move any more, my poor man; I'll be like this for the rest of my days!"

Hector felt a shiver running up and down his back. He asked for the doctor and inquired about the patient.

"I am puzzled," the doctor said. "Every time we try to lift her up or change her position, she utters heartrending screams; still, I am bound to believe her. I cannot say that she shams until I have seen her walk."

The old woman listened attentively; a sly look on her face. A week, two, then a month passed and still Mme. Simon did not leave her chair. Her appetite was excellent, she gained flesh and joked with the other patients. She seemed to accept her lot as a well-earned rest after fifty years of labor as a charwoman.

Hector came every day and found her the same; always repeating:

"I can't move, my poor man, I can't!"

When Hector came home, his wife would ask with anxiety:

"How is Mme. Simon?"

"Just the same; absolutely no change," answered Hector dejectedly.

They dismissed the servant and economized more than ever. The money received from his chief had been spent. Hector was desperate and one day he

called four doctors to hold a consultation. They examined Mme. Simon thoroughly, while she watched them slyly.

"We must make her walk," said one of the doctors.

"I can't, gentlemen; I can't!"

They took hold of her and dragged her a few steps, but she freed herself, and sank to the floor emitting such piercing screams, that they carried her back to her chair very gently.

They reserved their opinion, but concluded, however, that she was incapacitated for work.

When Hector brought the news to his wife, she collapsed.

"We had much better take her here, it would cost us less."

"In our own house! What are you thinking of?"

"What else can we do, dear? I am sure it is no fault of mine!"

The Man with the Dogs

His wife, even when talking to him, always called him Monsieur Bistaud, but in all the country round, within a radius of ten leagues, in France and Belgium, he was known as *Cet homme aux chiens*.* It was not a very valuable reputation, however, and "That man with the dogs," became a sort of pariah.

In Thierache they are not very fond of the custom-house officers, for everybody, high or low, profits by smuggling; thanks to which many articles, and especially coffee, gun-powder, and tobacco, are to be had cheap. It may here be stated that on that wooded, broken country, where the meadows are surrounded by brushwood, and the lanes are dark and narrow, smuggling is carried on chiefly by means of sporting dogs, who are broken in to become smuggling dogs. Scarcely an evening passes without some of them being seen, loaded with contraband, trotting silently along, pushing their nose through a hole in a hedge, with furtive

and uneasy looks, and sniffing the air to scent the custom-house officers and their dogs. These dogs also are specially trained, and are very ferocious, and can easily kill their unfortunate congeners, who become the game instead of hunting for it.

Now, nobody was capable of imparting this unnatural education to them so well as the man with the dogs, whose business consisted in breaking in dogs for the custom-house authorities. Everybody looked upon it as a dirty business, a business which could only be performed by a man without any proper feeling.

"He is a man's robber," the women said, "to take honest dogs in to nurse, and to make a lot of traitors out of them."

While the boys shouted insulting verses behind his back, and the men and the women abused him, no one ventured

*That man with the dogs.

to do it to his face, for he was not very patient, and was always accompanied by one of his huge dogs, and that served to make him respected.

Certainly without that bodyguard, he would have had a bad time of it, especially at the hands of the smugglers, who had a deadly hatred for him. By himself, and in spite of his quarrelsome looks, he did not appear very formidable. He was short and thin, his back was round, his legs were bandy, and his arms were as long and as thin as spiders' legs, and he could easily have been knocked down by a back-handed blow or a kick. But then, he had those confounded dogs, which intimidated even the bravest smugglers. How could they risk even a blow when he had those huge brutes, with their fierce and bloodshot eyes, and their square heads, with jaws like a vise, and enormous white teeth, sharp as daggers, and with huge molars which crunched up beefbones to a pulp? They were wonderfully broken in, were always by him, obeyed him by signs, and were taught not only to worry the smugglers' dogs, but also to fly at the throats of the smugglers themselves.

The consequence was that both he and his dogs were left alone, and people were satisfied with calling them names and sending them all to Coventry. No peasant ever set foot in his cottage, although Bistaud's wife kept a small shop and was a handsome woman, and the only persons who went there were the custom-house officers. The others took their revenge on them all by saying that the man with the dogs sold his wife to the custom-house officers, like he did his dogs.

"He keeps her for them, as well as

his dogs," they said jeeringly. "You can see that he is a born cuckold with his yellow beard and eyebrows, which stick up like a pair of horns."

His hair was certainly red or rather yellow, his thick eyebrows were turned up in two points on his temples, and he used to twirl them mechanically as if they had been a pair of mustaches. And certainly, with hair like that, and with his long beard and shaggy eyebrows, with his sallow face, blinking eyes, and dull looks, with his dogged mouth, thin lips, and his miserable, deformed body, he was not a pleasing object.

But he assuredly was not a com-
plaisant cuckold, and those who said that of him had never seen him at home. On the contrary, he was always jealous, and kept as sharp a lookout on his wife as he did on his dogs, and if he had broken her in at all, it was to be as faithful to him as they were.

She was a handsome and, what they call in the country, a fine body of a woman; tall, well-built, with a full bust and broad hips, and she certainly made more than one exciseman squint at her. But it was no use for them to come and sniff round her too closely, or else there would have been blows. At least, that is what the custom-house officers said, when anybody joked with them and said to them: "That does not matter; no doubt, you and she have hunted for your fleas together."

It was no use for them to defend Madame Bistaud's fierce virtue; nobody believed them, and the only answer they got, was: "You are hiding your game, and are ashamed of going to seduce a

woman who belongs to such a wretched creature."

And, certainly, nobody would have believed that such a buxom woman, who must have liked to be well attended to, could be satisfied with such a puny husband, with such an ugly, weak, red-headed fellow, who smelled of his dogs, and of the mustiness of the carrion which he gave to his hounds.

But they did not know that the man with the dogs had some years before given her, once for all, a lesson in fidelity, and that for a mere trifle, a venial sin! He had surprised her for allowing herself to be kissed by some gallant, that was all! He had not taken any notice, but when the man was gone, he brought two of his hounds into the room, and said:

"If you do not want them to tear your inside out as they would a rabbit's, go down on your knees so that I may thrash you!"

She obeyed in terror, and the man with the dogs had beaten her with a whip until his arm dropped with fatigue. And she did not venture to scream, although she was bleeding under the blows of the thong, which tore her dress, and cut into the flesh; all she dared to do was to utter low, hoarse groans; for while beating her, he kept on saying:

"Don't make a noise, by——; don't make a noise, or I will let the dogs fly at you."

From that time she had been faithful to Bistaud, though she had naturally not told anyone the reason for it, or for her hatred either, not even Bistaud himself, who thought that she was subdued for all time, and always found her very submissive and respectful. But for

six years she had nourished her hatred in her heart, feeding it on silent hopes and promises of revenge. And it was that flame of hope and that longing for revenge, which made her so coquettish with the custom-house officers, for she hoped to find a possible avenger among her inflammable admirers.

At last she came across the right man. He was a splendid sub-officer of the customs, built like a Hercules, with fists like a butcher's, and had long leased four of his ferocious dogs from her husband.

As soon as they had grown accustomed to their new master, and especially after they had tasted the flesh of the smugglers' dogs, they had, by degrees become detached from their former master, who had reared them. No doubt they still recognized him a little, and would not have sprung at his throat, as if he were a perfect stranger, but still, they did not hesitate between his voice and that of their new master, and they obeyed the latter only.

Although the woman had often noticed this, she had not hitherto been able to make much use of the circumstance. A custom-house officer, as a rule, only keeps one dog, and Bistaud always had half-a-dozen, at least, in training, without reckoning a personal guard which he kept for himself, which was the fiercest of all. Consequently, any duel between some lover assisted by only one dog, and the dog-breaker defended by his pack, was impossible.

But on that occasion, the chances were more equal. Just then he had only five dogs in the kennel, and two of them were quite young, though cer-

tainly old Bourreau* counted for several. After all they could risk a battle against him and the other three, with the two couples of the custom-house officer, and they must profit by the occasion.

So one fine evening, as the brigadier of the custom-house officers was alone in the shop with Bistaud's wife and was squeezing her waist, she said to him abruptly:

"Do you really want to have something to do with me, *Môssieu*† Fernand?"

He kissed her on the lips as he replied. "Do I really want to? I would give my stripes for it; so you see."

"Very well!" she replied, "do as I tell you, and upon my word, as an honest woman, I will be your commodity to do what you like with."

And laying a stress on that word *commodity*, which in that part of the country means strumpet, she whispered hotly into his ear:

"A commodity who knows her business, I can tell you, for my beast of a husband has trained me up in such a way that I am now absolutely disgusted with him."

Fernand, who was much excited, promised her everything that she wished, and feverishly, malignantly she told him how shamefully her husband had treated her a short time before, how her fair skin had been cut, and of her hatred and thirst for revenge. The brigadier acquiesced, and that same evening came to the cottage accompanied by his four hounds, with their spiked collars on.

"What are you going to do with them?" the man with the dogs asked.

"I have come to see whether you did

not rob me, when you leased them to me," the brigadier replied.

"What do you mean by 'robbed you?'"

"Well, robbed! I have been told that they could not tackle a dog like your Bourreau, and that many smugglers have dogs who are as good as he is."

"Impossible."

"Well, in case any of them should have one, I should like to see how the dogs that you sold me could tackle them."

The woman laughed an evil laugh, and her husband grew suspicious, when he saw that the brigadier replied to it by a wink. But his suspicions came too late. The breaker had no time to go to the kennel to let out his pack, for Bourreau had been seized by the custom-house officer's four dogs. At the same time, the woman locked the door; already her husband was lying motionless on the floor, while Bourreau could not go to his assistance, as he had enough to do to defend himself against the furious attack of the other dogs, who were almost tearing him to pieces, in spite of his strength and courage. Five minutes later two of the attacking hounds were totally disabled, with their bowels protruding, but Bourreau himself was dying, with his throat gaping.

Then the woman and the custom-house officer kissed each other before the breaker, whom they bound firmly. The two dogs of the custom-house officer that were still on their legs were panting for breath, and the other three were wallowing in their blood. And now the

*Executioner, hangman.

†Vulgar for *Monsieur*.

amorous couple were carrying on all sorts of capers, still further excited by the rage of the dog-breaker, who was forced to look at them, and who shouted in his despair:

"You wretches! you shall pay for this!" And the woman's only reply was, to say: "Cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!"

When she was tired of larking, her hatred was not yet satisfied, and she said to the brigadier:

"Fernand, go to the kennels and shoot the five other brutes, otherwise he will make them kill me to-morrow. Off you go, old fellow!"

The brigadier obeyed, and immediately five shots were heard in the darkness; it did not take long, but that short time had been enough for the man with the dogs to show what he could do. While he was tied, the two dogs of the custom-house officer had gradually recognized him, and came and fondled him, and as soon as he was alone with his wife, as she was insulting him, he said in his usual voice of command to the dogs:

"At her, Flanbard! at her, Garou!" The two dogs sprang at the wretched woman, and one seized her by the throat, while the other caught her by the side.

When the brigadier came back, she was dying on the ground in a pool of blood, and the man with the dogs said with a laugh: "There you see, that is the way I break in my dogs!"

The custom-house officer rushed out in horror, followed by his hounds, who licked his hands as they ran, and made them quite red.

The next morning the man with the dogs was found still bound, but chuckling, in his hovel that was turned into a slaughter-house.

They were both arrested and tried; the man with the dogs was acquitted, and the brigadier sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The matter gave much food for talk in the district, and is indeed still talked about, for the man with the dogs returned there, and is more celebrated than ever under his nickname. But his celebrity is not of a bad kind, for he is now just as much respected and liked as he was despised and hated formerly. He is still, as a matter of fact, the man with the dogs, as he is rightly called, for he has not his equal as a dog-breaker, for leagues round. But now he no longer breaks in mastiffs, as he has given up teaching honest dogs to "act the part of Judas," as he says, for those dirty custom-house officers. He only devotes himself to dogs to be used for smuggling, and he is worth listening to, when he says:

"You may depend upon it, that I know how to punish such commodities as she, when they have sinned! I was glad to see my dogs tearing that strumpet's skin and her lying mouth."

A King's Son

THE Boulevard, that river of life, was rushing along under the golden light of the setting sun. All the sky was red, dazzling red; and behind the Madeleine an immense, brilliant cloud threw into the long avenue an oblique shower of fire, vibrating like the rays from live coals.

The gay crowd moved along in this ruddy mist as if they were in an apotheosis. Their faces were golden; their black hats and coats were reflected in shades of purple; the varnish of their shoes threw red lights upon the asphalt of the sidewalks.

Before the *cafés*, men were drinking brilliantly colored drinks, which one might take for precious stones melted in the crystal.

In the midst of the consumers, two officers, in very rich uniforms, caused all eyes to turn in their direction on account of their gold braid and grand bearing. They were chatting pleasantly, without motive, rejoicing in this glory of life, in the radiant beauty of the evening. And they looked at the crowd—at the slow men and the hurrying women who left behind them an attractive, disturbing odor.

All at once, an enormous negro, clothed in black, corpulent, decorated with trinkets all over his duck waistcoat, his face shining as if it had been oiled, passed before them with an air of triumph. He smiled at the passers-by, he smiled at the venders of the newspapers, he smiled at the shining heavens, and the whole of Paris. He was so large that he towered above all their heads; and all the loungers that he left

behind him turned to contemplate his back.

Suddenly he perceived the officers and, pushing aside the drinkers, he rushed toward them. When he was before their table, he planted upon them his shining, delighted eyes, and, raising the corners of his mouth to his ears, showed his white teeth, shining like a crescent moon in a black sky. The two men, stupefied, looked at this ebony giant without understanding his merriment.

Then he cried out, in a voice that made everybody at all the tables laugh: "Good evenin', my Lieutenant."

One of the officers was chief of a battalion, the other was a colonel. The first said:

"I do not know you, sir; and cannot think what you can want of me."

The negro replied:

"Me like you much, Lieutenant Védie, siege of Bézi, much grapes, hunt me up."

The officer, much astonished, looked closely at the man, seeking to place him in his memory. Suddenly he cried:

"Timbuctoo?"

The negro, radiant, struck himself on his leg, uttered a most strident laugh, and bellowed:

"Yes, ya, ya, my Lieutenant, remember Timbuctoo, ya, good evenin'."

The officer extended his hand, laughing now himself with all his heart. Then Timbuctoo became grave. He seized the officer's hand and kissed it as the custom is in Arabia, so quickly that it could not be stopped. In a confused manner, the military man said to him, his voice rather severe:

"Come, Timbuctoo, we are not in

Africa. Be seated and tell me how you came to be here."

Timbuctoo swelled out his ample front and stammered, from trying to talk too quickly:

"Got much money, much, great rest'rant, good eat, Prussians come, much steal, much, French cooking, Timbuctoo chef to Emperor, two hundred thousand francs for me. Ah! ah! ah! ah!"

And he laughed, twisting himself and howling, with a perfect madness of joy in his eye.

When the officer who comprehended this strange language had asked him questions for some time, he said to him:

"Well, good-bye now, Timbuctoo; I will see you again."

The negro immediately arose, shook the hand that was extended to him, properly this time, and, continuing to laugh, cried:

"Good evenin', good evenin', my Lieutenant."

He went away so content that he gesticulated as he walked until he was taken for a crazy man.

The colonel asked: "Who was that brute?"

The commander responded: "A brave boy and a brave soldier. I will tell you what I know of him; it is funny enough.

* * * * *

"You know that at the commencement of the war of 1870 I was shut up in Bézières, which the negro calls Bézi. We were not besieged, but blockaded. The Prussian lines surrounded us everywhere, beyond the reach of cannon, no longer shooting at us but starving us little by little.

"I was then a lieutenant. Our garrison was composed of troops of every nature, the *débris* of cut-up regiments, fugitives and marauders separated from the body of the army. We even had eleven Turcos arrive finally, one evening, from no one knew where. They presented themselves at the gates of the town, harassed, hungry, drunk, and in tatters. They were given to me.

"I soon recognized the fact that they were averse to all discipline, that they were always absent and always tipsy. I tried the police station, even the prison, without effect. My men disappeared for whole days, as if they had sunk into the earth, then reappeared intoxicated enough to fall. They had no money. Where did they get their drink? How and by what means?

"This began to puzzle me much, especially as these savages interested me with their eternal laugh and their character, which was that of a great roguish child.

"I then perceived that they blindly obeyed the biggest one of them all, the one you have just seen. He governed them by his will, planned their mysterious enterprises, and was chief, all-powerful and incontestable. I made him come to my house and I questioned him. Our conversation lasted a good three hours, so great was my difficulty in penetrating his surprising mixture of tongues. As for him, poor devil, he made the most unheard-of efforts to be understood, invented words, gesticulated, fairly sweated from his difficulty, wiped his brow, puffed, stopped, and then began suddenly again when he thought he had found a new means of explaining himself.

"I finally divined that he was the son of a great chief, a sort of negro king in the neighborhood of Timbuctoo. I asked him his name. He responded something like Chavaharibouhalikhrana-fotapolara. It appeared simpler to me to call him by the name of his country: 'Timbuctoo.' And eight days later all the garrison was calling him that and nothing else.

"A foolish desire seized me of finding out where this ex-African prince found his drink. And I discovered it in a singular way.

"One morning I was on the ramparts studying the horizon, when I perceived something moving in a vine near by. It was at the time of the vintage; the grapes were ripe, but I scarcely gave this a thought. My idea was that some spy was approaching the town, and I organized an expedition complete enough to seize the prowlers. I myself took the command, having obtained the General's authorization.

"Three small troops were to set out through three different gates and join near the suspected vine to watch. In order to cut off the retreat of any spy; one detachment had to make a march of an hour at least. One man remained upon the wall for observation, to indicate to me by a sign that the person sought had not left the field. We preserved a deep silence, crawling, almost lying in the wheel-ruts. Finally, we reached the designated point; I suddenly deployed my soldiers, charging them quickly upon the vine, and found—Timbuctoo traveling along among the vine stocks on four paws, eating grapes, or rather snapping them up as a dog eats his soup, his mouth full, of leaves, even,

snatching the bunches off with a blow of his teeth.

"I wished to make him get up; there was no longer any mystery and I comprehended why he dragged himself along upon his hands and knees.

"When he was planted upon his feet, he swayed back and forth for some seconds, extending his arms and striking his nose. He was as tipsy as any tipsy man I have ever seen.

"They brought him away on two poles. He never ceased to laugh all along the route, gesticulating with his arms and legs.

"That was the whole of it. My merry fellows had drunk of the grape itself. Then, when they could no longer drink and could not budge, they went to sleep on the spot.

"As for Timbuctoo, his love for the vine passed all belief and all measure. He lived down there after the fashion of the thrushes, which he hated with the hatred of a jealous rival. He repeated without ceasing:

"'The th'ushes eat all g'apes, the d'unwards.'

* * * * *

"One evening some one came to find me. Off over the plain something seemed to be moving toward us. I did not have my glass with me, and could not distinguish what it was. It looked like a great serpent rolling itself along, or a funeral procession; how could I tell?

"I sent some men to meet this strange caravan, which soon appeared in triumphal march. Timbuctoo and nine of his companions were carrying a sort of altar, made of campaign chairs, upon which

were eight cut-off heads, bloody and grimacing. The tenth Turco dragged a horse by the tail to which another was attached, and six other beasts still followed, held in the same fashion."

"This is what I learned. Having set out for the vine, my Africans had suddenly perceived a detachment of Prussian soldiers approaching a neighboring village. Instead of fleeing they concealed themselves; then, when the officers put foot to the ground at an inn to refresh themselves, the eleven merry ones threw themselves upon them, put to flight the uhlands who believed themselves attacked, killed the two sentinels, then the Colonel and the five officers comprising his escort.

"That day I embraced Timbuctoo. But I also perceived that he walked with difficulty; I believed that he was wounded. He began to laugh and said to me:

"'Me get p'ovisions for country.'

"It seems that Timbuctoo had not made war for the sake of honor, but for gain. All that he found, all that appeared to him to have any value whatever, everything that glistened, especially, he plunged into his pocket. And what a pocket! An abyss that began at the hip and extended to the heels. Having learned the word of a trooper, he called it his 'profound.' It was, in fact, his profound! He had detached the gold from the Prussian uniforms, the copper from their helmets, the buttons, etc., and thrown them all into his profound, which was full to the brim.

"Each day he cast in there every glistening object that fell under his eye, —pieces of tin or pieces of money,—

which sometimes gave him an infinitely droll figure.

"He counted on bringing things back like an ostrich, which he resembled like a brother,—this son of a king tortured by a desire to devour these shining bodies. If he had not had his profound, what would he have done? Doubtless he would have swallowed them.

"Each morning his pocket was empty. He had a kind of general store where he heaped up his riches. Where? No one could ever discover.

"The General, foreseeing the uproar that Timbuctoo had created, had the bodies quickly interred in a neighboring village, before it was discovered that they had been decapitated. The Prussians came the next day. The mayor and seven distinguished inhabitants were shot immediately, as it had been learned through informers that they had denounced the Germans.

* * * * *

"The winter had come. We were harassed and desperate. There was fighting now, every day. The starved men could no longer walk. The eight Turks alone (three had been killed) were fat and shining, vigorous and always ready for battle. Timbuctoo even grew stout. He said to me one day:

"'You much hungry, me good food.'

"In fact, he brought me an excellent fillet. Of what? We had neither beeves, sheep, goats, asses, nor pigs. It was impossible for him to procure a horse. I reflected upon all this after having devoured my viand. Then, a terrible thought came to me. These negroes were born near a country where they ate men! And every day soldiers were falling all about them! I ques-

tioned Timbuctoo. He did not wish to say anything. I did not insist, but henceforth I ate no more of his presents.

"He adored me. One night the snow overtook us at the outposts. We were seated on the ground. I looked with pity upon the poor negroes shivering under this white, freezing powder. As I was very cold, I began to cough. Immediately, I felt something close around me like a great warm cover. It was Timbuctoo's mantle, which he had thrown around my shoulders.

"I arose and returned the garment to him, saying:

"'Keep it, my boy, you have more need of it than I.'

"He answered: 'No, no, my Lieutenant, for you, me not need, me hot, hot!'

"And he looked at me with suppliant eyes. I replied:

"'Come obey, keep your mantle; I wish it.'

"The negro arose, drew his saber which he knew how to make cut like a scythe, held in the other the large cloak that I had refused and said:

"'So you not take mantle, me cut; no mantle.'

"He would have done it. I yielded.

* * * * *

"Eight days later we had capitulated. Some among us had been able to get away. The others were going out of the town and giving themselves up to the conquerors.

"I directed my steps toward the

Armory, where we were to reunite, when I met face to face a negro giant clothed in white duck and wearing a straw cap. It was Timbuctoo. He seemed radiant and walked along, his hands in his pockets, until we came to a little shop, where in the window there were two plates and two glasses.

"I asked him: 'What are you doing here?'

"He responded:

"'Me not suffer, me good cook, me make Colonel Algeie to eat, me feed Prussians, steal much, much.'

"The mercury stood at ten degrees. I shivered before this negro in white duck. Then he took me by the arm and made me enter. There I perceived a huge sign that he was going to hang up before his door as soon as I had gone out, for he had some modesty. I read, traced by the hand of some accomplice, these words:

"'MILITARY CUISINE OF M.
TIMBUCTOO.

Formerly caterer to H. M. the Emperor.
Paris Artist. Prices Moderate.'

"In spite of the despair which was gnawing at my heart, I could not help laughing, and I left my negro to his new business. It would have availed nothing to have him taken prisoner.

"You see how he has succeeded, the rascal, Bézières to-day belongs to Germany. Timbuctoo's restaurant was the beginning of revenge."



Mohammed Fripouli

"SHALL we have our coffee on the roof?" asked the captain.

I answered:

"Yes, certainly."

He rose. It was already dark in the room which was lighted only by the interior court, after the fashion of Moorish houses. Before the high, ogive windows, convolvulus vines hung from the gnat terrace, where they passed the hot summer evenings. There only remained upon the table some grapes, big as plums, some fresh figs of a violet hue, some yellow pears, some long, plump bananas, and some Tougourt dates in a basket of *alfa*.

The Moor who waited on them opened the door and I went upstairs to the azure walls which received from above the soft light of the dying day.

And soon I gave a deep sigh of happiness, on reaching the terrace. It overlooked Algiers, the harbor, the roadstead, and the distant shores.

The house, bought by the captain, was a former Arab residence, situated in the midst of the old city, among those labyrinthine little streets, where swarm the strange population of the African coasts.

Beneath us, the flat, square roofs descended, like steps of giants, to the pointed roofs of the European quarter of the city. Behind these might be perceived the flags of the boats at anchor, then the sea, the open sea, blue and calm under the blue and calm sky.

We stretched ourselves upon the mats, our heads resting upon cushions, and while leisurely sipping the savory coffee of the locality, I gazed at the first stars in the dark azure. They were

hardly perceptible, so far away, so pale, as yet giving scarcely any light.

A light heat, a winged heat, caressed our skins. And at times the warm, heavy air, in which there was a vague odor, the odor of Africa, seemed the hot breath of the desert, coming over the peaks of Atlas. The captain, lying on his back, said:

"What a country, my dear boy! How soft life is here! How peculiar and delicious repose is in this land! How the nights seem to be made for dreams."

I looked at the stars coming out with a lazy, yet active, curiosity, with a drowsy happiness.

I murmured:

"You might tell me something of your life in the south."

Captain Marret was one of the oldest officers in the army of Africa, an officer of fortune, a former *spahi*, who had cut his way to his present rank.

Thanks to him, to his relations and friendships, I had been able to accomplish a superb trip to the desert, and I had come that evening to thank him before going to France.

He said: "What kind of a story do you want? I have had so many adventures during twelve years of sand, that I can't think of a single one." And I replied: "Well, tell me of the Arabian women." He did not reply. He remained stretched out with his arms bent, and his hands under his head, and I noticed at times the odor of his cigar, the smoke of which went straight up into the sky, so breezeless was the night.

And all of a sudden he began to laugh.

"Ah! yes, I'll tell you about a queer

affair which occurred in my first days in Algeria.

"We had then in the army of Africa some extraordinary types, such as have not been seen since, types which would have amused you, so much in fact, that you would have wanted to spend all your life in this country.

"I was a simple *spahi*, a little *spahi*, twenty years old, light-haired, swaggering, supple, and strong. I was attached to a military command at Boghar. You know Boghar, which they call the balcony of the south. You have seen from the top of the fort the beginning of this land of fire, devoured, naked, tormented, stony, and red. It is really the antechamber to the desert, the broiling and superb frontier of the immense region of yellow solitudes.

"Well, there were forty of us *spahis* at Boghar, a company of *joyeux*, and a squadron of Chasseurs d'Afrique, when it was learned that the tribe of the Ouled-Berghi had assassinated an English traveler, come, no man knows how, into the country, for the English have the devil in their bodies.

"Punishment had to be given for the crime against a European; but the commanding officer hesitated at sending a column, thinking, in truth, that one Englishman wasn't worth so much of a movement.

"Now, as he was talking of this affair with the captain and the lieutenant, a quartermaster of *spahis* who was waiting for orders proposed all at once to go and punish the tribe if they would give him only six men. You know that in the south they are more free than in the city garrisons and there exists between officer and soldier a sort of com-

radeship which is not found elsewhere.

"The captain began to laugh:

"'You, my good man?'

"'Yes, captain, and if you desire it, I will bring you back the whole tribe as prisoners.'

"The commandant, who had fantastic ideas, took him at his word.

"'You will start to-morrow morning with six men of your own selection, and if you don't accomplish your purpose, look out for yourself.'

"The subofficer smiled in his mustache.

"'Fear nothing, commandant. My prisoners shall be here Wednesday noon at latest.'

"The quartermaster, Mohammed Fripouli, as he was called, was a Turk, a true Turk, who had entered the service of France, after a life which had been very much knocked about and not altogether too clean. He had traveled in many places, in Greece, in Asia Minor, in Egypt, in Palestine, and he had been forced to pay a good many forfeits on the way. He was an ex-Bashi-Bazouk, bold, ferocious, and gay, with the calm gaiety of the Oriental. He was stout, very stout, but supple as a monkey and he rode a horse marvelously well. His mustache, incredibly thick and long, always aroused in me a confused idea of the crescent moon and a scimitar. He hated the Arabs with a deadly hatred, and he pursued them with frightful cruelty, continually inventing new tricks, calculated and terrible perfidies. He was possessed, too, of incredible strength and inconceivable audacity.

"The commandant said to him: 'Choose your men, my blade.'

"Mohammed took me. He had confidence in me, the brave man, and I was

grateful to him, body and soul, for this choice, which gave me as much pleasure as the Cross of Honor later.

"So we started the next morning, at dawn, all seven of us, and nobody else. My comrades were composed of those bandits, those plunderers, who, after marauding and playing the vagabond in all possible countries, finish by taking service in some foreign legion. Our army in Africa was then full of these rascals, excellent soldiers but not at all scrupulous.

"Mohammed had given to each to carry ten pieces of rope about a meter in length. I was charged, besides as being the youngest and the least heavy, with a piece about a hundred meters long. When he was asked what he was going to do with all that rope, he answered with his sly and placid air:

"'It is to fish for the Arabs.'

"And he winked his eye mischievously, an action which he had learned from an old Chasseur d'Afrique from Paris.

"He marched in front of our squad, his head wrapped in a red turban, which he always wore in a campaign, and he smiled with cunning chuckles in his enormous mustache.

"He was truly handsome, this big Turk, with his powerful paunch, his shoulders of a colossus and his tranquil air. He rode a white horse of medium height, but strong; and the rider seemed ten times too big for his mount.

"We were passing through a long, dry ravine, bare and yellow, in the valley of the Chelif, and we talked of our expedition. My companions had all possible accents, there being among them a Spaniard, a Greek, an American, and two Frenchmen. As for Mohammed Fri-

pouli, he spoke with an incredibly thick tongue.

"The sun, the terrible sun, the sun of the south, which no one knows anything about on the other side of the Mediterranean, fell upon our shoulders, and we advanced at a walk, as they always do in that country.

"All day we marched without meeting a tree or an Arab.

"Toward one o'clock in the afternoon, we had eaten, near a little spring which flowed between the rocks, the bread and dried mutton which we had brought in our knapsacks; then after twenty minutes' rest, went out again on our way.

"Toward six o'clock in the evening, finally, after a long detour which our leader had forced us to make, we discovered behind a knob, a tribe encamped. The brown, low tents made dark spots on the yellow earth, looking like great mushrooms growing at the foot of this red hill which was burned by the sun.

"They were our game. A little further away, on the edge of a meadow of *alfa* of a dark green color, the tied horses were pasturing.

"'Gallop!' ordered Mohammed, and we arrived like a whirlwind in the midst of the camp. The women, terrified, covered with white rags which hung floating upon them, ran quickly to their canvas huts, cringing and crouching and crying like hunted beasts. The men, on the contrary, came from all sides to defend themselves. We struck right for the tallest tent, that of the *agha*.

"We kept our sabers in the scabbards, after the example of Mohammed, who galloped in a singular fashion. He sat absolutely motionless, erect upon his

small horse, which strove under him madly to carry such a weight. And the tranquillity of the rider with his long mustache contrasted strangely with the liveliness of the animal.

"The native chief came out of his tent as we arrived before it. He was a tall, thin man, dark, with a gleaming eye, full forehead, and arched eyebrows.

"He cried in Arabic:

" 'What do you want?'

"Mohammed, stopping his horse short, replied in his language: 'Was it you who killed the English traveler?'

"The *agha* said in a strong voice:

" 'I am not going to be examined by you!'

"There was around us, as it were, a rumbling tempest. The Arabs ran up from all sides, pressing and surrounding us, all the time vociferating loudly.

"They had the air of ferocious birds of prey, with their big curved noses, their thin faces with high cheek-bones, their flowing garments, agitated by their gestures.

"Mohammed smiled, his turban crooked, his eye excited, and I saw shivers of pleasure on his cheeks which were pendulous, fleshy, and wrinkled.

"He replied in a thunderous voice:

" 'Death to him who has given death!'

"And he pointed his revolver at the brown face of the *agha*. I saw a little smoke leap from the muzzle; then a red foam of blood and brains spurted from the forehead of the chief. He fell, like a block, on his back, spreading out his arms, which lifted like wings the folds of his burnous.

"Truly, I thought my last day had come, such a terrible tumult rose about us.

"Mohammed had drawn his saber. We unsheathed ours, like him. He cried, whirling away the men, who were pressing him the closest:

" 'Life to those who submit. Death to all others.'

"And seizing the nearest in his herculean grasp, he dragged him to his saddle, tied his hands, yelling to us:

" 'Do as I, and saber those who resist.'

"In five minutes, we had captured twenty Arabs, whose wrists we securely bound. Then we pursued the fleeing ones, for there had been a perfect rout around us at the sight of the naked sabers. We captured about twenty more men.

"Over all the plains might be seen white objects which were running. The women were dragging along their children and uttering piercing cries. The yellow dogs, like jackals, barked around us, and showed us their white fangs.

"Mohammed, who seemed mad with joy, leaped from his horse at a bound and seizing the cord which I had bought:

" 'Attention!' he cried, 'two men to the ground.'

"Then he made a terrible and peculiar thing—a string of prisoners, or rather a string of hanged men. He had firmly tied the two wrists of the first captive, then he made a running knot around his neck with the same cord, which bound his neck. Our fifty prisoners soon found themselves fastened in such a way that the slightest movement of one to flee would strangle him as well as his two neighbors. Every gesture they made pulled on the noose around their necks, and they had to march with the same step with but a pace

separating from one another, under the penalty of falling immediately, like a hare in a snare.

"When this strange deed was done, Mohammed began to laugh, with his silent laughter, which shook his stomach without a sound leaving his mouth.

"'That's an Arabian chain,' said he.

"We began to twist and turn before the terrified and piteous faces of the prisoners.

"'Now,' cried our chief, 'at each end fix me that.'

"A stake was fastened at each end of this ribbon of white-clad captives, like phantoms, who stood motionless as if they had been changed into stones.

"'Now, let us dine!' said the Turk. A fire was made and a sheep was cooked, which we ate with our fingers. Then we had some dates which we found in the trees; drank some milk obtained in the Arab tents; and we picked up a few silver trinkets forgotten by the fugitives. We were tranquilly finishing our repast, when I perceived, on the hill opposite, a singular gathering. It was the women who had just now fled, nothing but women. They came running toward us. I pointed them out to Mohammed Fripouli.

"He smiled:

"'It is the dessert!' said he.

"'Ah! yes! the dessert.'

"They approached, running like mad women, and soon we were peppered with stones which they hurled at us without stopping their pace; then we saw that they were armed with knives, tent stakes, and old utensils.

"'To horse!' cried Mohammed. It was time. The attack was terrible. They came to free the prisoners and tried to cut the rope. The Turk, understanding the danger, became furious and shouted: 'Saber them! Saber them! Saber them!' And as we stood motionless, disturbed by this new kind of charge, hesitating at killing women, he threw himself upon the advancing band.

"He charged all alone, this battalion of women, in tatters, and he began to saber them, the wretch, like a madman, with such rage and fury, that a white body might be seen to fall at every stroke of his arm.

"He was so terrible that the women, terrified, fled as quickly as they had come, leaving on the ground a dozen dead and wounded, whose crimson blood stained their white garments.

"And Mohammed, frowning, turned toward us, exclaiming:

"'Start, start, my sons! They will come back.'

"And we beat a retreat, conducting at a slow step our prisoners, who were paralyzed by fear of strangulation.

"The next day, noon struck as we arrived at Boghar with our chain of hanged men. Only six died on the way. But it had often been necessary to loosen the knots from one end of the convoy to the other, for every shock half strangled ten captives at once."

The captain was silent. I did not say anything in reply. I thought of the strange country where such things could be seen and I gazed at the innumerable and shining flock of stars in the dark sky.

“Bell”

HE HAD KNOWN better days, in spite of his misery and infirmity. At the age of fifteen, he had had both legs cut off by a carriage on the highway near Varville. Since that time he had begged, dragging himself along the roads, across farmyards, balanced upon his crutches which brought his shoulders to the height of his ears. His head seemed sunk between two mountains.

Found as an infant in a ditch by the curate of Billettes, on the morning of All Souls' day, he was, for this reason, baptized Nicholas Toussaint (All Saints); brought up by charity, he was a stranger to all instruction; crippled from having drunk several glasses of brandy offered him by the village baker, for the sake of a laughable story, and since then a vagabond, knowing how to do nothing but hold out his hand.

Formerly, Baroness d'Avary gave him a kind of kennel full of straw beside her poultry-house, to sleep in, on the farm adjoining her castle; and he was sure, in days of great hunger, of always finding a piece of bread and a glass of cider in the kitchen. He often received a few sous, also, thrown by the old lady from her steps or her chamber window. Now she was dead.

In the villages, they gave him scarcely anything. They knew him too well. They were tired of him, having seen his little, deformed body on the two wooden legs going from house to house for the last forty years. And he went there because it was the only corner of the country that he knew on the face of the earth—these three or four hamlets where he dragged out his miserable life. He had tried the frontier for his beg-

ging, but had never passed the boundaries, for he was not accustomed to anything new.

He did not even know whether the world extended beyond the trees which had always limited his vision. He had never asked. And when the peasants, tired of meeting him in their fields or along their ditches, cried out to him: “Why do you not go to some other villages, in place of always stumping about here?” he did not answer, but took himself off, seized by a vague and unknown fear, that fear of the poor who dread a thousand things, confusedly,— new faces, injuries, suspicious looks from people whom they do not know, the police, who patrol the roads in twos, and make a plunge at them, by instinct, in the bushes or behind a heap of stones.

When he saw them from afar shining in the sun, he suddenly developed a singular agility, the agility of a wild animal to reach his lair. He tumbled along on his crutches, letting himself fall like a bundle of rags and rolling along like a ball, becoming so small as to be almost invisible, keeping close as a hare running for covert, mingling his brown tatters with the earth. He had, however, never had any trouble with them. But this fear and this slyness were in his blood, as if he had received them from his parents whom he had never seen.

He had no refuge, no roof, no hut, no shelter. He slept anywhere in summer, and in winter he slipped under the barns or into the stables with a remarkable adroitness. He always got out before anyone was aware of his presence. He knew all the holes in the buildings

that could be penetrated; and, manipulating his crutches with a surprising vigor, using them as arms, he would sometimes crawl, by the sole strength of his wrists, into the hay-barns, where he would remain four or five days without budging, when he had gathered together sufficient provisions for his needs.

He lived like the animals in the woods, in the midst of men without knowing anyone, without loving anyone, and exciting in the peasants only a kind of indifferent scorn and resigned hostility. They nicknamed him "Bell," because he balanced himself between his two wooden pegs like a bell between its two standards.

For two days he had had nothing to eat. No one would give him anything. They would, now, have nothing more to do with him. The peasants in their doors, seeing him coming, would cry out to him from afar:

"You want to get away from here, now. 'Twas only three days ago that I gave you a piece of bread!"

And he would turn about on his props and go on to a neighboring house, where he would be received in the same fashion.

The women declared, from one door to another:

"One cannot feed that vagabond the year round."

Nevertheless, the vagabond had need of food every day. He had been through Saint-Hilaire, Varville, and Billettes without receiving a centime or a crust of bread. Tournolles remained as his only hope; but to reach it he must walk two leagues upon the highway, and he felt too weary to drag him-

self along, his stomach being as empty as his pocket.

He set out on the way, nevertheless.

It was December, and a cold wind blew over the fields, whistling among the bare branches. The clouds galloped across the low, somber sky, hastening one knew not where. The cripple went slowly, placing one support before the other with wearisome effort, balancing himself upon the part of a leg that remained to him, which terminated in a wooden foot bound about with rags.

From time to time he sat down by a ditch and rested for some minutes. Hunger gave him a distress of soul, confused and heavy. He had but one idea: "to eat." But he knew not by what means.

For three hours he toiled along the road; then, when he perceived the trees of the village, he hastened his movements.

The first peasant he met, of whom he asked alms, responded to him:

"You here yet, you old customer? I wonder if we are ever going to get rid of you!"

And Bell took himself away. From door to door he was treated harshly, and sent away without receiving anything. He continued his journey, however, patient and obstinate. He received not one sou.

Then he visited the farms, picking his way across ground made moist by the rains, so spent that he could scarcely raise his crutches. They chased him away, everywhere. It was one of those cold, sad days when the heart shrivels, the mind is irritated, the soul is somber, and the hand does not open to give or to aid.

When he had finished the rounds of all the houses he knew, he went and threw himself down by a ditch which ran along by M. Chiquet's yard. He unhooked himself, as one might say to express how he let himself fall from between his two high crutches, letting them slip along his arms. And he remained motionless for a long time, tortured by hunger, but too stupid to well understand his unfathomable misery.

He awaited he knew not what, with that vague expectation which ever dwells in us. He awaited, in the corner of that yard, under a freezing wind for that mysterious aid which one always hopes will come from heaven or mankind, without asking how, or why, or through whom it can arrive.

A flock of black hens passed him, seeking their living from the earth which nourishes all beings. Every moment they picked up a grain or an invisible insect, then continued their search slowly, but surely.

Bell looked at them without thinking of anything; then there came to him—to his stomach rather than to his mind—the idea, or rather the sensation, that these animals were good to eat when roasted over a fire of dry wood.

The suspicion that he would be committing a robbery only touched him slightly. He took a stone which lay at his hand and, as he had skill in this way, killed neatly the one nearest him that was approaching. The bird fell on its side, moving its wings. The others fled, half balanced upon their thin legs, and Bell, climbing again upon his crutches, began to run after them, his movements much like that of the hens.

When he came to the little black

body, touched with red on the head, he received a terrible push in the back, which threw him loose from his supports and sent him rolling ten steps ahead of them. And M. Chiquet, exasperated, threw himself upon the marauder, rained blows upon him, striking him like a madman, as a robbed peasant strikes with his fist and his knee, upon all the infirm body which could not defend itself.

The people of the farm soon arrived and began to help their master beat the beggar. Then when they were tired of beating, they picked him up, carried him, and shut him up in the woodhouse while they went to get a policeman.

Bell, half dead, bloody and dying of hunger, lay still upon the ground. The evening came, then the night, and then the dawn. He had had nothing to eat.

Toward noon, the policemen appeared, opening the door with precaution as if expecting resistance, for M. Chiquet pretended that he had been attacked by robbers against whom he had defended himself with great difficulty.

The policeman cried out:

“Come there, now! stand up!”

But Bell could no longer move, although he did try to hoist himself upon his sticks. They believed this a feint, a sly ruse for the purpose of doing some mischief, and the two men handled him roughly, standing him up and planting him by force upon his crutches.

And fear had seized him, that native fear of the yellow long-belt, that fear of the Newgate-bird before the detective, of the mouse before the cat. And, by superhuman effort, he succeeded in standing.

“March!” said the policeman. And he

marched. All the employees of the farm watched him as he went. The women shook their fists at him; the men sneered at and threatened him. They had got him, finally! Good riddance.

He went away between the two guardians of the peace. He found energy enough in his desperation to enable him to drag himself along until evening, when he was completely stupefied, no longer knowing what had happened, too bewildered to comprehend anything.

The people that he met stopped to look at him in passing, and the peasants murmured:

"So that is the 'robber'!"

They came toward nightfall to the chief town in the district. He had never been seen there. He did not ex-

actly understand what was taking place, nor what was likely to take place. All these frightful, unheard-of things, these faces and these new houses, filled him with consternation.

He did not say a word, having nothing to say, because he comprehended nothing. Besides, he had not talked to anybody for so many years that he had almost lost the use of his tongue; and his thoughts were always too confused to formulate into words.

They shut him up in the town prison. The policemen did not think he needed anything to eat, and they left him until the next day.

When they went to question him, in the early morning, they found him dead upon the ground. Surprise seized them!

The Victim

THE north wind whistled in a tempest, carrying through the sky the enormous winter clouds, heavy and black, which threw, in passing, furious rain-bursts over the earth.

A heavy sea moaned and shook the coast, hurrying upon the shore enormous waves, slow and dribbling, which rolled with the noise of artillery. They come in slowly, one after the other, as high as mountains, scattering from their heads in the wind the white foam that seems like the sweat of monsters.

The tempest rushed into the little valley of Yport, whistling and groaning, whirling the slates from the roofs, breaking down fortifications, knocking over chimneys, darting through the

streets in such gusts that one could not walk there without keeping close to the walls, and lifting up children like leaves and throwing them into the fields beyond the houses.

They had brought the fishing boats to land, for fear of the sea which would sweep the whole coast at full tide, and some sailors, concealed behind the round wall of the breakwater, lay on their sides watching the anger of the heavens and the sea.

Then they went away, little by little, because night fell upon the tempest, enveloping in shadow the excited ocean and all the disturbance of the elements in fury.

Two men still remained, their hands

in their pockets, with back rounded under a sudden squall, woolen caps drawn down to the eyes, two great Norman fishermen, with rough beards for collars, with skin browned by the salt winds of the open sea, with blue eyes pricked out in the middle in a black dot, the piercing eyes of mariners who see to the end of the horizon like birds of prey.

One of them said:

"Come, let us go, Jeremy. We will pass the time at dominoes. I will pay."

The other still hesitated, tempted by the game and the drink, knowing well that he would get drunk if he went into Paumelle's and held back by the thought of his wife at home alone in their hovel.

He remarked: "It looks as if you had made a bet to get me tipsy every night. Tell me, what's the object, since you always pay?"

And he laughed at all the brandy he had drunk at the expense of the other, laughed with the contented laugh of a Norman who has the best of it.

Mathurin, his comrade, kept pulling him by the arm. "Come," he would say, "come, Jeremy. It is not the evening to go home without anything warm on the inside. What are you afraid of? Your wife will warm the bed for you!"

Jeremy responded: "Only the other evening I couldn't find the door—they almost had to go fishing for me in the brook in front of our house!"

And he laughed still at the memory of this vagary and went patiently toward Paumelle's *café*, where the illuminated glass shone brilliantly. He went, drawn along by Mathurin and pushed by the wind, incapable of resisting these two forces.

The low hall was filled with sailors,

smoke, and noise. All the men, clothed in wool, their elbows on the table, were talking in loud voices to make themselves heard. The more drinkers that entered, the more was it necessary to howl into the uproar of voices and of dominoes hitting against the marble, with an attempt to make more noise still.

Jeremy and Mathurin seated themselves in a corner and commenced a game, and little glasses disappeared, one after another, into the depth of their throats.

Then they played other games and drank more glasses. Mathurin always turned and winked an eye to the proprietor, a large man as red as fire, and who laughed as if he knew about some good farce; and Jeremy guzzled the alcohol, balanced his head, uttered roars of laughter, looking at his companion with a stupid, contented air.

Finally, all the clients were going. And, each time that one of them opened the door to go out, a blast entered the *café*, driving in a whirlwind the smoke of the pipes, swinging the lamps to the end of their chains and making their flames dance. And they could hear suddenly the profound shock of an in-rolling wave, and the moaning of the squall.

Jeremy, his clothing loosened at the neck, took the pose of a tipsy man, one leg extended, one arm falling, while in the other hand he held his dominoes.

They were alone now with the proprietor, who approached them full of interest. He asked:

"Well, Jeremy, how goes it in the interior? Are you refreshed with all this sprinkling?"

And Jeremy muttered. "Since it

slipped down—makes it dry in there.”

The *café* keeper looked at Mathurin with a sly air. Then he asked:

“And your brother, Mathurin, where is he at this hour?”

The sailor answered with a quiet laugh:

“Where it is warm; don't you worry.”

And the two looked at Jeremy who triumphantly put down the double six announcing:

“There! the syndic.”

When they had finished the game, the proprietor declared:

“You know, my lads, I must put up the shutters. But I will leave you a lamp and bottle. There's twenty sous left for it. You will shut the outside door, Mathurin, and slip the key under the step as you did the other night.”

Mathurin answered: “Don't worry. I understand.”

Paumelle shook hands with both his tardy clients, and mounted heavily his wooden staircase. For some minutes his heavy step resounded in the little house; then a loud creaking announced that he had put himself in bed.

The two men continued to play; from time to time a more violent rage of the tempest shook the door, making the walls tremble, and the two men would raise their heads as if some one was about to enter. Then Mathurin took the bottle and filled Jeremy's glass.

Suddenly, the clock, suspended over the counter, sounded midnight. Its hoarse ring resembled a crash of pans and the blows vibrated a long time, with the resonance of old iron.

Mathurin immediately rose, like a sailor whose quart is finished. He said:

“Come, Jeremy, we must break off.”

The other put himself in motion with more difficulty, got his equilibrium by leaning against the table; then he reached the door and opened it, while his companion extinguished the light.

When they were in the street, and Mathurin had locked the door, he said:

“Well, good night, till to-morrow.”

And he disappeared into the shadows.

Jeremy took three steps, extended his hands, met a wall which held him up, and then began to walk along stumblingly. Sometimes, a gust rushing through the straight street, threw him forward, making him run for some steps; then when the violence of the wind ceased, he would stop short, and having lost his poise, begin to vacillate upon the capricious legs of a drunken man.

He went, by instinct, toward his dwelling, as birds fly to their nests. Finally, he recognized his door and began to fumble to find the keyhole to place his key in it. He could not find it, and swore in an undertone. Then he struck upon it with his fist, calling his wife to come and aid him:

“Melina! Eh! Melina!”

As he leaned against the door in order not to fall, it yielded, flew open, and Jeremy, losing his balance, entered his house in a tumble, then rolled upon his nose into the room; he felt that something heavy had passed over his body and then fled into the night.

He did not move, perplexed with fright, astonished, in the devil of a fright, from the spirits of all the mysterious and shadowy things, and he waited a long time without daring to make a sound. But, as he saw that nothing more moved, a little reason

came back to him, the troubled reason of vagary.

And he slowly sat up. Then he waited still a long time and finally said:

"Melina!"

His wife did not answer.

Then, suddenly, a doubt went through his obscure brain, a wavering doubt, a vague suspicion. He did not move; he remained there, seated on the floor in the dark, gathering his ideas, clutching his reflections as incomplete and uncertain as his legs.

He called again:

"Tell me who it was, Melina, tell me who it was. I will do nothing to you."

He waited. No voice came out of the shadow. He reasoned out loud now:

"I am drunk—all same! I am drunk! He made me drink like this now! He kept me from coming back home. I am drunk!"

Then he repeated: "Tell me who it was, Melina, or I'm going to do harm."

After having waited again, he continued, with the slow and obstinate logic of an intoxicated man:

"It was him kept me at that lazy Paumelle's; and other evenings too, so I couldn't come home. He's some 'complice. Ah! carrion!"

Slowly he got up on his knees. A sudden anger helped him, mingling with

the fermentation of the drink. He repeated:

"Tell me who it was, Melina, or I'm going to beat you; I give you warning."

He was standing now, trembling with anger, as if the alcohol which he had in his body was inflamed in his veins. He took a step, hit against a chair, seized it, walked to the bed, touched it, and felt there the warm body of his wife.

Then, excited with rage, he cried:

"Ah! there you are, filth; and you wouldn't answer."

And, raising the chair which he held in his robust sailor's fist, he brought it down before him with exasperated fury. A scream arose from the bed; a terrified, piercing cry. Then he began to beat like a thrasher in a barn. Nothing moved now. The chair was broken in pieces. One leg remained in his hand and he hit with it until he gasped.

Then suddenly he stopped and asked:

"Will you tell me who it was, now?"

Melina did not answer.

Then, worn out with fatigue and stupid from his violence, he sat down again upon the floor, fell over, and was asleep.

When the day appeared, a neighbor, seeing the door open, entered. He perceived Jeremy snoring upon the floor, where lay the *débris* of a chair, and on the bed a pulp of flesh and blood.

The Englishman

THEY made a circle around Judge Ber-mutier, who was giving his opinion of the mysterious affair that had happened

at Saint-Cloud. For a month Paris had doted on this inexplicable crime. No one could understand it at all.

M. Bermutier, standing with his back to the chimney, talked about it, discussed the divers opinions, but came to no conclusions.

Many women had risen and come nearer, remaining standing, with eyes fixed upon the shaven mouth of the magistrate, whence issued these grave words. They shivered and vibrated, crisp through their curious fear, through that eager, insatiable need of terror which haunts their soul, torturing them like a hunger.

One of them, paler than the others, after a silence, said:

"It is frightful. It touches the supernatural. We shall never know anything about it."

The magistrate turned toward her, saying:

"Yes, Madame, it is probable that we never shall know anything about it. As for the word 'supernatural,' when you come to use that, it has no place here. We are in the presence of a crime skillfully conceived, very skillfully executed, and so well enveloped in mystery that we cannot separate the impenetrable circumstances which surround it. But, once in my life, I had to follow an affair which seemed truly to be mixed up with something very unusual. However, it was necessary to give it up, as there was no means of explaining it."

Many of the ladies called out at the same time, so quickly that their voices sounded as one:

"Oh! tell us about it."

M. Bermutier smiled gravely, as judges should, and replied:

"You must not suppose, for an instant, that I, at least, believed there was anything superhuman in the ad-

venture. I believe only in normal causes. And, if in place of using the word 'supernatural' to express what we cannot comprehend we should simply use the word 'inexplicable,' it would be much better. In any case, the surrounding circumstances in the affair I am going to relate to you, as well as the preparatory circumstances, have affected me much. Here are the facts:

"I was then judge of Instruction at Ajaccio, a little white town lying on the border of an admirable gulf that was surrounded on all sides by high mountains.

"What I particularly had to look after there was the affairs of *vendetta*. Some of them were superb; as dramatic as possible, ferocious, and heroic. We find there the most beautiful subjects of vengeance that one could dream of, hatred a century old, appeased for a moment but never extinguished, abominable plots, assassinations becoming massacres and almost glorious battles. For two years I heard of nothing but the price of blood, of the terribly prejudiced Corsican who is bound to avenge all injury upon the person of him who is the cause of it, or upon his nearest descendants. I saw old men and infants, cousins, with their throats cut, and my head was full of these stories.

"One day we learned that an Englishman had rented for some years a little villa at the end of the Gulf. He had brought with him a French domestic, picked up at Marseilles on the way.

"Soon everybody was occupied with this singular person, who lived alone in his house, only going out to hunt and fish. He spoke to no one, never came to the town, and, every morning, prac-

ticed shooting with a pistol and a rifle for an hour or two.

"Some legends about him were abroad. They pretended that he was a high personage fled from his own country for political reasons; then they affirmed that he was concealing himself after having committed a frightful crime. They even cited some of the particularly horrible details.

"In my capacity of judge, I wished to get some information about this man. But it was impossible to learn anything. He called himself Sir John Rowell.

"I contented myself with watching him closely; although, in reality, there seemed nothing to suspect regarding him.

"Nevertheless, as rumors on his account continued, grew, and became general, I resolved to try and see this stranger myself, and for this purpose began to hunt regularly in the neighborhood of his property.

"I waited long for an occasion. It finally came in the form of a partridge which I shot and killed before the very nose of the Englishman. My dog brought it to me; but, immediately taking it I went and begged Sir John Rowell to accept the dead bird, excusing myself for intrusion.

"He was a tall man with red hair and red beard, very large, a sort of placid, polite Hercules. He had none of the so-called British haughtiness, and heartily thanked me for the delicacy in French, with a beyond-the-Channel accent. At the end of a month we had chatted together five or six times.

"Finally, one evening, as I was passing by his door, I perceived him astride a chair in the garden, smoking his pipe. I saluted him and he asked me in to

have a glass of beer. It was not necessary for him to repeat before I accepted.

"He received me with the fastidious courtesy of the English, spoke in praise of France and of Corsica, and declared that he loved that country and that shore.

"Then, with great precaution in the form of a lively interest, I put some questions to him about his life and his projects. He responded without embarrassment, told me that he had traveled much, in Africa, in the Indies, and in America. He added, laughing:

"'I have had many adventures, oh! yes.'

"I began to talk about hunting, and he gave me many curious details of hunting the hippopotamus, the tiger, the elephant, and even of hunting the gorilla.

"I said: 'All these animals are very formidable.'

"He laughed: 'Oh! no. The worst animal is man.' Then he began to laugh, with the hearty laugh of a big contented Englishman. He continued:

"'I have often hunted man, also.'

"He spoke of weapons and asked me to go into his house to see his guns of various makes and kinds.

"His drawing-room was hung in black, in black silk embroidered with gold. There were great yellow flowers running over the somber stuff, shining like fire.

"'It is Japanese cloth,' he said.

"But in the middle of a large panel, a strange thing attracted my eye. Upon a square of red velvet, a black object was attached. I approached and found it was a hand, the hand of a man. Not a skeleton hand, white and characteristic, but a black, desiccated hand, with yellow joints with the muscles bare and

on them traces of old blood, of blood that seemed like a scale, over the bones sharply cut off at about the middle of the fore-arm, as with a blow of a hatchet. About the wrist was an enormous iron chain, riveted, soldered to this unclean member, attaching it to the wall by a ring sufficiently strong to hold an elephant.

"I asked: 'What is that?'"

"The Englishman responded tranquilly:

"It belonged to my worst enemy. It came from America. It was broken with a saber, cut off with a sharp stone, and dried in the sun for eight days. Oh, very good for me, that was!"

"I touched the human relic, which must have belonged to a colossus. The fingers were immoderately long and attached by enormous tendons that held the straps of skin in place. This dried hand was frightful to see, making one think, naturally, of the vengeance of a savage.

"I said: 'This man must have been very strong.'

"With gentleness the Englishman answered:

"Oh! yes; but I was stronger than he. I put this chain on him to hold him.'

"I thought he spoke in jest and replied:

"The chain is useless now that the hand cannot escape.'

"Sir John Rowell replied gravely: 'It always wishes to escape. The chain is necessary.'

"With a rapid, questioning glance, I asked myself: 'Is he mad, or is that an unpleasant joke?'"

"But the face remained impenetrable.

tranquil, and friendly. I spoke of other things and admired the guns.

"Nevertheless, I noticed three loaded revolvers on the pieces of furniture, as if this man lived in constant fear of attack.

"I went there many times after that; then for some time I did not go. We had become accustomed to his presence; he had become indifferent to us.

"A whole year slipped away. Then, one morning, toward the end of November, my domestic awoke me with the announcement that Sir John Rowell had been assassinated in the night.

"A half hour later, I entered the Englishman's house with the central Commissary and the Captain of Police. The servant, lost in despair, was weeping at the door. I suspected him at first, but afterward found that he was innocent.

"The guilty one could never be found.

"Upon entering Sir John's drawing-room, I perceived his dead body stretched out upon its back, in the middle of the room. His waistcoat was torn, a sleeve was hanging, and it was evident that a terrible struggle had taken place.

"The Englishman had been strangled! His frightfully black and swollen face seemed to express an abominable fear; he held something between his set teeth; and his neck, pierced with five holes apparently done with a pointed iron, was covered with blood.

"A doctor joined us. He examined closely the prints of fingers in the flesh and pronounced these strange words:

"One would think he had been strangled by a skeleton.'

"A shiver ran down my back and I cast my eyes to the place on the wall where I had seen the horrible, torn-off hand. It was no longer there. The chain was broken and hanging.

"Then I bent over the dead man and found in his mouth a piece of one of the fingers of the missing hand, cut off, or rather sawed off by the teeth exactly at the second joint.

"Then they tried to collect evidence. They could find nothing. No door had been forced, no window opened, or piece of furniture moved. The two watchdogs on the premises had not been aroused.

"Here, in a few words, is the deposition of the servant:

"For a month, his master had seemed agitated. He had received many letters which he had burned immediately. Often, taking a whip, in anger which seemed like dementia, he had struck in fury, this dried hand, fastened to the wall and taken, one knew not how, at the moment of a crime.

"He had retired late and shut himself in with care. He always carried arms. Often in the night he talked out loud, as if he were quarreling with some one. On that night, however, there had been no noise, and it was only on coming to open the windows that the servant had found Sir John assassinated. He suspected no one.

"I communicated what I knew of the death to the magistrates and public officers, and they made minute inquiries upon the whole island. They discovered nothing.

"One night, three months after the crime, I had a frightful nightmare. It seemed to me that I saw that hand, that horrible hand, running like a scorpion or a spider along my curtains and my walls. Three times I awoke, three times I fell asleep and again saw that hideous relic galloping about my room, moving its fingers like paws.

"The next day they brought it to me, found in the cemetery upon the tomb where Sir John Rowell was interred—for they had not been able to find his family. The index finger was missing.

"This, ladies, is my story. I know no more about it."

The ladies were terrified, pale, and shivering. One of them cried:

"But that is not the end, for there was no explanation! We cannot sleep if you do not tell us what was your idea of the reason of it all."

The magistrate smiled with severity, and answered:

"Oh! certainly, ladies, but it will spoil all your terrible dreams. I simply think that the legitimate proprietor of the hand was not dead and that he came for it with the one that remained to him. But I was never able to find out how he did it. It was one kind of revenge"

One of the women murmured:

"No, it could not be thus."

And the Judge of Information, smiling still, concluded:

"I told you in the beginning that my explanation would not satisfy you."

VOLUME X

Sentiment

IT WAS during the hunting season, at the country seat of the De Bannevilles. The autumn was rainy and dull. The red leaves, instead of crackling under foot, rotted in the hollows after the heavy showers.

The forest, almost leafless, was as humid as a bath-room. There was a moldy odor under the great trees, stripped of their fruits, which enveloped one on entering, as if a lye had been made from the steeped herbs, the soaked earth, and the continuous rainfall. The hunters' ardor was dampened, the dogs were sullen, their tails lowered and their hair matted against their sides, while the young huntresses, their habits drenched with rain, returned each evening depressed in body and spirit.

In the great drawing-room, after dinner, they played lotto, but without enthusiasm, as the wind made a clattering noise upon the shutters and forced the old weather vanes into a spinning-top tournament. Some one suggested telling stories, as they are told in books; but no one could think of anything very amusing. The hunters narrated some of their adventures with the gun, the slaughter of wolves, for example; and the ladies racked their brains without finding anywhere the imagination of Scheherazade.

They were about to abandon this form of diversion, when a young lady, carelessly playing with the hand of her old, unmarried aunt, noticed a little ring made of blond hair, which she had often seen before but thought nothing about.

Moving it gently about the finger she said, suddenly: "Tell us the history

of this ring, Auntie; it looks like the hair of a child—"

The old maiden reddened and then grew pale, then in a trembling voice she replied: "It is sad, so sad that I never care to speak about it. All the unhappiness of my life is centered in it. I was young then, but the memory of it remains so painful that I weep whenever I think of it."

They wished very much to hear the story, but the aunt refused to tell it; finally, they urged so much that she at length consented.

"You have often heard me speak of the Sentèze family, now extinct. I knew the last three men of this family. They all died within three months in the same manner. This hair belonged to the last one. He was thirteen years old, when he killed himself for me. That appears very strange to you, doesn't it?"

"It was a singular race, a race of fools, if you will, but of charming fools, of fools for love. All, from father to son, had these violent passions, waves of emotion which drove them to deeds most exalted, to fanatical devotion, and even to crime. Devotion was to them what it is to certain religious souls. Those who become monks are not of the same nature as drawing-room favorites. One might almost say, as a proverb, 'He loved like a Santèze.'

"To see them was to divine this characteristic. They all had curly hair, growing low upon the brow, beard crinkly, eyes large, very large, whose rays seemed to penetrate and disturb you, without your knowing just why.

"The grandfather of the one of whom this is the only souvenir, after many

adventures, and some duels on account of entanglements with women, when toward sixty, became passionately taken with the daughter of his farmer. I knew them both. She was blond, pale, distinguished looking, with a soft voice and a sweet look, so sweet that she reminded one of a madonna. The old lord took her home with him, and immediately became so captivated that he was unable to pass a minute away from her. His daughter and his daughter-in-law who lived in the house, found this perfectly natural, so much was love a tradition of the family. When one was moved by a great passion, nothing surprised them, and, if anyone expressed a different notion before them, of disunited lovers, or revenge after some treachery, they would both say, in the same desolate voice: 'Oh! how he (or she) must have suffered before coming to that!' Nothing more. They were moved with pity by all dramas of the heart and never spoke slightingly of them, even when they were unworthy.

"One autumn, a young man, M. de Gradelle, invited for the hunting, eloped with the young woman.

"M. de Santèze remained calm, as if nothing had happened. But one morning they found him in the kennel in the midst of the dogs.

"His son died in the same fashion, in a hotel in Paris, while on a journey in 1841, after having been deceived by an opera singer.

"He left a child of eleven years, and a widow, the sister of my mother. She came with the little one to live at my father's house, on the De Bertillon estate. I was then seventeen.

"You could not imagine what an as-

tonishing, precocious child this little Santèze was. One would have said that all the powers of tenderness, all the exaltation of his race had fallen upon this one, the last. He was always dreaming and walking alone in a great avenue of elms that led from the house to the woods. I often watched this sentimental youngster from my window, as he walked up and down with his hands behind his back, with bowed head, sometimes stopping to look up, as if he saw and comprehended things beyond his age and experience.

"Often after dinner, on clear nights, he would say to me: 'Let us go and dream, Cousin.' And we would go together into the park. He would stop abruptly in the clear spaces, where the white vapor floats, that soft light with which the moon lights up the clearings in the woods, and say to me, seizing my hands: 'Look! Look there! But you do not understand, I feel it. If you comprehended, you would be happy. One must know how to love.' I would laugh and embrace him, this boy, who loved me until his dying day.

"Often, too, after dinner, he would seat himself upon my mother's knee. 'Come, Aunt,' he would say to her, 'tell us some love story.' And my mother, for his pleasure, would tell him all the family legends, the passionate adventures of his fathers, as they had been told a thousand times, true and false. It is these stories that have ruined these men; they never concealed anything, and prided themselves upon not allowing a descendant of their house to lie.

"He would be uplifted, this little one, by these terrible or affecting tales, and sometimes he would clap his hands and

cry out: 'I, too; I, too, know how to love, better than any of them.'

"Then he began to pay me his court; a timid, profoundly tender devotion, so droll that one could but laugh at it. Each morning I had flowers picked by him, and each evening, before going to his room, he would kiss my hand, murmuring: 'I love you!'

"I was guilty, very guilty, and I have wept since, unceasingly, doing penance all my life, by remaining an old maid—or rather an affianced widow, his widow. I amused myself with this childish devotion, even inciting him. I was coquettish, enticing as if he were a man, caressing and deceiving. I excited this child. It was a joke to me, and a pleasing diversion to his mother and mine. He was eleven years old! Think of it! Who would have taken seriously this passion of a midget! I kissed him as much as he wished. I even wrote sweet letters to him that our mothers read. And he responded with letters of fire, that I still have. He had a belief all his own in our intimacy and love, judging himself a man. We had forgotten that he was a Santèze!

"This lasted nearly a year. One evening, in the park, he threw himself down at my knees, kissing the hem of my dress, with furious earnestness, repeating: 'I love you! I love you! I love you! and shall even to death. If you ever deceive me, understand, if you ever leave me for another, I shall do as my father did—' And he added in a low voice that gave one the shivers: 'You know what I shall do!'

"Then, as I remained amazed and dumfounded, he got up and, stretching himself on tiptoe, for I was much taller

than he, he repeated in my ear, my name, my first name, 'Genevieve!' in a voice so sweet, so pretty, so tender that I trembled to my very feet.

"I muttered: 'Let us return to the house!' He said nothing further, but followed me. As we were ascending the steps, he stopped me and said: 'You know if you abandon me, I shall kill myself.'

"I understood now that I had gone too far, and immediately became more reserved. When he reproached me for it, one day, I answered him: 'You are now too large for this kind of joking, and too young for serious love. I will wait.'

"I believed myself freed from him.

"He was sent away to school in the autumn. When he returned, the following summer, I had become engaged. He understood at once, and for over a week preserved so calm an appearance that I was much disturbed.

"The ninth day, in the morning, I perceived, on rising, a little paper slipped under my door. I seized it and read: 'You have abandoned me, and you know what I said. You have ordered my death. As I do not wish to be found by anyone but you, come into the park, at the place where last year I said that I loved you, and look up.'

"I felt myself becoming mad. I dressed quickly and ran quickly, so quickly that I fell exhausted at the designated spot. His little school cap was on the ground in the mud. It had rained all night. I raised my eyes and saw something concealed by the leaves, for there was a wind blowing, a strong wind.

"After that, I knew nothing of what I did. I shouted, fainted, perhaps, and fell, then got up and ran to the house. I recovered my reason in my bed, with my mother for my pillow.

"I at first believed that I had dreamed all this in a frightful delirium. I muttered: 'And he, he—Gontran, where is he—'

"Then they told me it was all true. I dared not look at him again, but I asked for a lock of his blond hair. Here—it—is—" And the old lady held out her hand in a gesture of despair.

Then, after much use of her handkerchief and drying of her eyes, she continued: "I broke off my engagement without saying why—and I—have remained always the—widow of this child thirteen years old."

Then her head fell upon her breast and she wept pensively for a long time.

And, as they dispersed to their rooms for the night, a great hunter, whose quiet she had disturbed somewhat, whispered in the ear of his neighbor:

"What a misfortune to be so sentimental! Don't you think so?"

Francis

WE WERE going out of the asylum when I perceived in one corner of the courtyard a tall thin man, who was forever calling an imaginary dog. He would call out, with a sweet and tender voice: "Cocotte, my little Cocotte, come here, Cocotte, come here my beauty," striking his leg, as one does to attract the attention of an animal. I asked the doctor what the matter was with the man.

"Oh! that is an interesting case," said he, "he is a coachman named Francis, and he became insane from drowning his dog."

I insisted upon his telling me the story. The most simple and humble things sometimes strike most to our hearts.

And here is the adventure of this man which was known solely to a groom, his comrade.

In the suburbs of Paris lived a rich, middle-class family. Their villa was in

the midst of a park, on the bank of the Seine. Their coachman was this Francis, a country boy, a little awkward, but of good heart, simple and easily duped.

When he was returning one evening to his master's house a dog began to follow him. At first he took no notice of it, but the persistence of the beast in walking on his heels caused him finally to turn around. He looked to see if he knew this dog. No, he had never seen it before.

The dog was frightfully thin and had great hanging dugs. She totted behind the man with a woeful, famished look, her tail between her legs, her ears close to her head, and stopped when he stopped, starting again when he started.

He tried to drive away this skeleton of a beast: "Get out! If you want to save yourself— Go, now! Hou! Hou!" She would run away a few steps and then sit down waiting; then,

when the coachman started on again, she followed behind him.

He made believe to pick up stones. The animal fled a little way with a great shaking of the flabby mammillæ, but followed again as soon as the man turned his back.

Then the coachman, Francis, took pity and called her. The dog approached timidly, her back bent in a circle, and all the ribs showing under the skin. The man smoothed these projecting bones and, moved by pity, for the misery of the beast, said: "Come along, then!" Immediately the tail began to move; she felt the welcome, the adoption; and instead of staying at her new master's heels, she began to run ahead of him.

He installed her on some straw in his stable, then ran to the kitchen in search of bread. When she had eaten her fill, she went to sleep, curled up, ringlike.

The next day the coachman told his master who allowed him to keep the animal. She was a good beast, intelligent and faithful, affectionate and gentle.

But immediately they discovered in her a terrible fault. She was inflamed with love from one end of the year to the other. In a short time she had made the acquaintance of every dog about the country, and they roamed about the place day and night. With the indifference of a girl, she shared her favors with them, feigning to like each one best, dragging behind her a veritable mob composed of many different models of the barking race, some as large as a fist, others as tall as an ass. She took them to walk through routes with interminable courses, and when she stopped to rest in the shade, they made a circle

about her and looked at her with tongues hanging out.

The people of the country considered her a phenomenon; they had never seen anything like it. The veterinary could not understand it.

When she returned to the stable in the evening, the crowd of dogs made siege for proprietorship. They wormed their way through every crevice in the hedge which inclosed the park, devastated the flower beds, broke down the flowers, dug holes in the urns, exasperating the gardener. They would howl the whole night about the building where their friend lodged and nothing could persuade them to go away.

In the daytime, they even entered the house. It was an invasion, a plague, a calamity. The people of the house met at any moment, on the staircase, and even in the rooms little yellow pug dogs with tails decorated, hunting dogs, bulldogs, wolf hounds with filthy skin, vagabonds without life or home, beside some new-world enormities which frightened the children.

All the unknown dogs for ten miles around came, from one knew not where, and lived, no one knew how, disappearing all together.

Nevertheless, Francis adored Cocotte. He had named her Cocotte, "without malice, sure that she merited her name." And he repeated over and over again: "This beast is a person. It only lacks speech."

He had a magnificent collar in red leather made for her, which bore these words, engraved on a copper plate: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, from Francis, the coachman."

She became enormous. She was as

fat as she had been thin, her body puffed out, under which hung always the long, swaying mammillæ. She had fattened suddenly and walked with difficulty, the paws wide apart, after the fashion of people that are too large, the mouth open for breath, wide open as soon as she tried to run.

She showed a phenomenal fecundity, producing, four times a year, a litter of little animals, belonging to all varieties of the canine race. Francis, after having chosen the one he would leave her "to take the milk," would pick up the others in his stable apron and pitilessly throw them into the river.

Soon the cook joined her complaints to those of the gardener. She found dogs under her kitchen range, in the cupboards, and in the coal bin, always fleeing whenever she encountered them.

The master, becoming impatient, ordered Francis to get rid of Cocotte. The man, inconsolable, tried to place her somewhere. No one wanted her. Then he resolved to lose her, and put her in charge of a wagoner who was to leave her in the country the other side of Paris, beyond De Joinville-le-Pont.

That same evening Cocotte was back.

It became necessary to take measures. For the sum of five francs, they persuaded a cook on the train to Havre to take her. He was to let her loose when they arrived.

At the end of three days, she appeared again in her stable, harassed, emaciated, exhausted.

The master was merciful, and insisted on nothing further.

But the dogs soon returned in greater numbers than ever, and were more provoking. And as they were giving a great

dinner, one evening, a stuffed chicken was carried off by a dog, under the nose of the cook, who dared not dispute the right to it.

This time the master was angry, and calling Francis to him, said hotly: "If you don't kick this beast into the water to-morrow morning, I shall put you out, do you understand?"

The man was undone, but he went up to his room to pack his trunk, preferring to leave the place. Then he reflected that he would not be likely to get in anywhere else, dragging this unwelcome beast behind him; he remembered that he was in a good house, well paid and well fed; and he said to himself that it was not worth while giving up all this for a dog. He enumerated his own interests and finished by resolving to get rid of Cocotte at dawn the next day.

However, he slept badly. At daybreak he was up; and, preparing a strong cord, he went in search of the dog. She arose slowly, shook herself, stretched her limbs, and came to greet her master. Then his courage failed and he began to stroke her tenderly, smoothing her long ears, kissing her on the muzzle, lavishing upon her all the loving names that he knew.

A neighboring clock struck; he could no longer hesitate. He opened the door; "Come," said he. The beast wagged her tail, understanding only that she was to go out.

They reached the bank and chose a place where the water seemed deepest. Then he tied one end of the cord to the beautiful leather collar, and taking a great stone, attached it to the other end. Then he seized Cocotte in his arms and kissed her furiously, as one does when

he is taking leave of a person. Then he held her right around the neck, fondling her and calling her "My pretty Cocotte, my little Cocotte," and she responded as best she could, growling with pleasure.

Ten times he tried to throw her in, and each time his heart failed him.

Then, abruptly, he decided to do it, and, with all his force, hurled her as far as possible. She tried at first to swim, as she did when taking a bath, but her head, dragged by the stone, went under again and again. She threw her master a look of despair, a human look, battling, as a person does when drowning. Then, before the whole body sank, the hind paws moved swiftly in the water; then they disappeared also.

For five minutes bubbles of air came to the surface as if the river had begun to boil. And Francis, haggard, excited, with heart palpitating, believed he saw Cocotte writhing in the slime. And he said to himself, with the simplicity of a peasant: "What does she think of me by this time, that beast?"

He almost became idiotic. He was sick for a month, and each night, saw the dog again. He felt her licking his hands; he heard her bark.

It was necessary to call a physician. Finally he grew better; and his master and mistress took him to their estate near Rouen.

There he was still on the bank of the Seine. He began to take baths. Every

morning he went down with the groom to swim across the river.

One day, as they were amusing themselves splashing in the water, Francis suddenly cried out to his companion:

"Look at what is coming toward us. I am going to make you taste a cutlet."

It was an enormous carcass, swelled and stripped of its hair, its paws moving forward, in the air, following the current.

Francis approached it making his jokes:

"What a prize, my boy! My! But it is not fresh! It is not thin, that is sure!"

And he turned about, keeping at a distance from the great, putrefying body.

Then, suddenly, he kept still and looked at it in strange fashion. He approached it again, this time near enough to touch. He examined carefully the collar, took hold of the leg, seized the neck, made it turn over, drew it toward him, and read upon the green copper that still adhered to the discolored leather: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, from Francis, the coachman."

The dead dog had found her master, sixty miles from their home!

He uttered a fearful cry, and began to swim with all his might toward the bank, shouting all the way. And when he reached the land, he ran, all bare, through the country. He was mad!

The Assassin

THE guilty man was defended by a very young lawyer, a beginner, who spoke thus:

"The facts are undeniable, gentlemen of the jury. My client, an honest man, an irreproachable employee, gentle and timid, assassinated his employer in a moment of anger which seems to me incomprehensible. If you will allow me, I would like to look into the psychology of the crime, so to speak, without wasting any time or attempting to excuse anything. We shall then be able to judge better.

"John Nicholas Lougère is the son of very honorable people, who made of him a simple, respectful man.

"That is his crime: respect! It is a sentiment, gentlemen, which we of today no longer know, of which the name alone seems to exist while its power has disappeared. It is necessary to enter certain old, modest families to find this severe tradition, this religion of a thing or of a man, this sentiment where belief takes on a sacred character, this faith which doubts not, nor smiles, nor entertains a suspicion.

"One cannot be an honest man, a truly honest man in the full force of the term, and be respectful. The man who respects has his eyes closed. He believes. We others, whose eyes are wide open upon the world, who live here in this hall of justice, this purger of society, where all infamy runs aground, we others who are the confidants of shame, the devoted defenders of all human meanness, the support, not to say the supporters, of male and female sharpers, from a prince to a tramp, we who welcome with indulgence, with com-

placence, with a smiling benevolence all the guilty and defend them before you, we who, if we truly love our profession, measure our legal sympathy by the size of the crime, we could never have a respectful soul. We see too much of this river of corruption, which catches the chiefs of power as well as the lowest scamp; we know too much of how it gives and takes and sells itself. Places, offices, honors brutally exchanged for a little money, or skillfully exchanged for titles and interests in industrial enterprises, or sometimes, simply for the kiss of a woman.

"Our duty and our profession force us to be ignorant of nothing, to suspect everybody, because everybody is doubtful; and we are taken by surprise when we find ourselves face to face with a man, like the assassin seated before you, who possesses the religion of respect to such a degree that he will become a martyr for it.

"We others, gentlemen, have a sense of honor, a certain need of propriety, from a disgust of baseness, from a sentiment of personal dignity and pride; but we do not carry at the bottom of our hearts the blind, inborn, brutal faith of this man.

"Let me tell you the story of his life:

"He was brought up, like many another child, to separate all human acts into two parts: the good and the bad. He was shown the good with an irresistible authority which made him only distinguish the bad, as we distinguish day and night. His father did not belong to the superior race of minds who, looking from a height, see the sources of belief

and recognize the social necessities born of these distinctions.

"He grew up, religious and confident, enthusiastic and limited. At twenty-two he married. His wife was a cousin, brought up as he was, simple and pure as he was. His was the inestimable privilege of having for a companion an honest woman with a true heart, the rarest and most respectable thing in the world. He had for his mother that veneration which surrounds mothers in patriarchal families, that profound respect which is reserved for divinities. This religion he reflected somewhat upon his wife, and it became scarcely less as conjugal familiarity increased. He lived in absolute ignorance of double dealing, in a state of constant uprightness and tranquil happiness which made him a being apart from the world. Deceiving no one he had never a suspicion that any one would deceive him.

"Some time before his marriage, he had become cashier in the office of Mr. Langlais, the man who was lately assassinated by him.

"We know, gentlemen of the jury, by the testimony of Mrs. Langlais and of her brother, Mr. Perthuis, a partner of her husband, of all the family and of all the higher employees of the bank, that Lougère was a model employee, upright, submissive, gentle, prompt, and deferential toward his superiors. They treated him with the consideration due to his exemplary conduct. He was accustomed to this homage and to a kind of respect shown to Mrs. Lougère, whose worthiness was upon all lips.

"But she died of typhoid fever in a

few days' time. He assuredly felt a profound grief, but the cold, calm grief of a methodical heart. Only from his pallor and from a change in his looks was one able to judge how deeply he had been wounded.

"Then, gentlemen, the most natural thing in the world happened.

"This man had been married ten years. For ten years he had been accustomed to feel the presence of a woman near him always. He was habituated to her care, her familiar voice upon his return, the good night at evening, the cheerful greeting of the morning, the gentle rustle of the dress so dear to the feminine heart, to that caress, at once lover-like and maternal, which renders life pleasant, to that loved presence that made the hours move less slowly. He was also accustomed to being spoiled at table, perhaps, and to all those attentions which become, little by little, so indispensable.

"He could no longer live alone. Then, to pass the interminable evenings, he got into the habit of spending an hour or two in a neighboring wine shop. He would drink a glass and sit there motionless, following, with heedless eye, the billiard balls running after one another under the smoke of the pipes, listening to, without hearing, the discussion of the players, the disputes of his neighbors over politics, and the sound of laughter that sometimes went up from the other end of the room, from some unusual joke. He often ended by going to sleep, from sheer lassitude and weariness. But, at the bottom of his heart and of his flesh, there was the irresist-

ible need of a woman's heart and flesh; and, without thinking, he approached each evening a little nearer to the desk where the cashier, a pretty blonde, sat, attracted to her unconquerably, because she was a woman.

"At first they chatted, and he got into the habit, so pleasant for him, of passing the evening by her side. She was gracious and kind, as one learns in this occupation to smile, and she amused herself by making him renew his order as often as possible, which makes business good.

"But each day Lougère was becoming more and more attached to this woman whom he did not know, whose whole existence he was ignorant of, and whom he loved only because he was in the way of seeing nobody else.

"The little creature was crafty, and soon perceived that she could reap some benefit from this guileless man; she then sought out the best means of exploiting him. The most effective, surely, was to marry him.

"This she accomplished without difficulty.

"Need I tell you, gentlemen of the jury, that the conduct of this girl had been most irregular and that marriage, far from putting a check to her flight, seemed on the contrary to render it more shameless?

"From the natural sport of feminine astuteness, she seemed to take pleasure in deceiving this honest man with all the employees of his office. I said with all. We have letters, gentlemen. There was soon a public scandal, of which the husband alone, as usual, was the only one ignorant.

"Finally, this wretch, with an interest

easy to understand, seduced the son of the proprietor, a young man nineteen years old, upon whose mind and judgment she had a deplorable influence. Mr. Langlais, whose eyes had been closed up to that time, through friendship for his employee, resented having his son in the hands, I should say in the arms of this dangerous woman, and was legitimately angry.

"He made the mistake of calling Lougère to him on the spot and of speaking to him of his paternal indignation.

"There remains nothing more for me to say, gentlemen, except to read to you the recital of the crime, made by the lips of the dying man, and submitted as evidence. It says:

"I learned that my son had given to this woman, that same night, ten thousand francs, and my anger was stronger on that account. Certainly, I never suspected the honorableness of Lougère, but a certain kind of blindness is more dangerous than positive faults. And so I had him come to me and told him that I should be obliged to deprive myself of his services.

"He remained standing before me, terrified, and not comprehending. He ended by demanding, rather excitedly, some explanation. I refused to give him any, affirming that my reasons were wholly personal. He believed then that I suspected him of indelicacy and, very pale, besought, implored me to explain. Held by this idea, he was strong and began to talk loud. As I kept silent, he abused and insulted me, until he arrived at such a degree of exasperation that I was fearful of results.

"Then, suddenly, upon a wounding word that struck upon a full heart, I threw the whole truth in his face.

"He stood still some seconds, looking at me with haggard eyes. Then I saw

him take from my desk the long shears, which I use for making margins to certain registers, I saw him fall upon me with uplifted arm, and I felt something enter my throat just above the breast, without noticing any pain.'

"This, gentlemen of the jury, is the

simple recital of this murder. What more can be said for his defense? He respected his second wife with blindness because he respected his first with reason."

After a short deliberation, the prisoner was acquitted.

Semillante

THE widow of Paolo Saverini lived alone with her son in a poor little house on the ramparts of Bonifacio. The town, built upon the side of the mountain, suspended in spots above the sea, overlooks, through a defile bristling with rocks, the lowest part of Sardinia. At its foot, on the other side, and almost entirely surrounding it, is a cut in the cliff, which resembles a gigantic corridor and serves as a port; it leads up to the first houses (after a long circuit between the two abrupt walls), the little Italian or Sardinian fishing-boats, and, every two weeks, the old, broken-winded steamer that plies between there and Ajaccio.

Upon the white mountains, the bunch of houses makes a spot whiter still. They have the appearance of nests of wild birds, fastened thus upon this rock, overlooking this terrible passageway where ships scarcely dare venture. The wind, without repose, harasses the sea, harasses the bare coast, which is nibbled by it until it has but little vegetation; it rushes into the defile, whose two sides it strips bare. The track of pale foam, fastened to black points on the innumerable rocks which pierce the waves, has the look of bits of cloth

floating and palpitating upon the surface of the water.

The house of the widow Saverini, soldered to the edge of the cliff, had three windows opening upon this wild and desolated horizon.

She lived there alone, with her son Antoine and their dog Semillante, a great, thin beast with long, coarse hair, of a race that watches the herds. This dog served the young man for hunting.

One evening, after a dispute, Antoine Saverini was killed traitorously with a blow of a knife by Nicholas Ravolati who, the same night, went over to Sardinia.

When the old woman received the body of her child, which some passers-by brought to her, she did not weep but remained a long time motionless, looking at him. Then, extending her wrinkled hand upon the dead body, she promised revenge. She did not wish anyone to remain with her, and she shut herself up with the body and the dog.

The dog howled. She howled, this beast, in a continuous fashion, at the foot of the bed, her head extended toward her master, her tail held fast between her legs. She no more stirred than did the mother, who, hanging now

upon the body, her eyes fixed, was weeping great tears while gazing at him.

The young man, upon his back, clothed in his coat of gray cloth, torn and bloody about the breast, seemed to be asleep. And there was blood everywhere: on his shirt, drawn up in the first moments, on his waistcoat, his trousers, upon his face, and his hands. Little clots of blood had coagulated in his beard and in his hair.

The old mother began to speak to him. At the sound of her voice, the dog was silent.

"Come, come," she said, "you shall be avenged, my little one, my boy, my poor child. Sleep, sleep, you shall be avenged, do you hear? It is your mother who promises! And she always keeps her word, does your mother, as you know well."

And gently she bent over him, gluing her cold lips to his dead mouth. Then Semillante began to groan again. She uttered a long, plaintive monotone, harrowing and terrible.

There they remained, the corpse, the woman and the beast, until morning.

Antoine Saverini was buried the next day, and soon no one spoke of him more in Bonifacio.

He had left no brother, no near relatives. There was no man to follow up the revenge. Alone, the mother thought of it, the old woman.

On the other side of the defile she saw, each morning and evening, a white spot on the coast. It was the little Sardinian village, Longosardo, where Corsican bandits took refuge when too closely pursued. They almost peopled this hamlet, opposite the shore of their

own country, and awaited there the moment of returning, of going back again to the brakes. It was in this village, she knew, that Nicholas Ravolati had taken refuge.

All alone, the whole day long, seated before her window, she would look down there and think of vengeance. How could she do it without anyone to help, infirm as she was and so near death? But she had promised, she had sworn it upon his dead body. She could not forget, she must not delay. How should she accomplish it? She could not sleep at night; she had no repose, no ease; she sought obstinately. The dog slept at her feet, and, sometimes raising her head, howled to the distance. Since her master was no longer there, she often howled thus, as if she were calling him, as if her soul, that of an inconsolable beast, had preserved a remembrance of him that nothing could efface.

One night, as Semillante began to howl in this way, the mother suddenly had an idea, a savage, vindictive, ferocious idea. She meditated upon it until morning; then, rising at the approach of day, she betook herself to the church. She prayed, prostrate upon the floor, humbled before God, supplicating him to aid her, to sustain her, to give to her poor, spent body force that would be sufficient to avenge the death of her son.

Then she returned. She had in her yard an old barrel with the head knocked in, which caught the rain from the gutters. She emptied it and turned it over, making it fast to the soil by means of some stakes and stones; then she chained Semillante in this niche and went into her house.

Now she walked about constantly in her room, without repose, her eye fixed upon the coast of Sardinia. He was down there, was that assassin.

The dog howled all day and all night. The old woman carried her some water in the morning, in a bowl. But nothing more; no soup, no bread.

The day slipped away. Semillante, weakened from want of food, slept. The next day she had shining eyes and bristling hair; she pulled desperately at her chain.

Still the old woman gave her nothing to eat. The beast became furious, bay-ing with raucous voice. The night passed away thus. Then, at the break of day, Mother Saverini went to the house of a neighbor and begged him to give her two bundles of straw. She took some old clothes that her husband had formerly worn and filled them full of the fodder, to simulate a human body.

Having stuck a stick in the ground before Semillante's niche, she bound the manikin to it, giving him the appearance of standing. Then she formed a head by means of a package of old linen.

The dog, surprised, looked at the straw man and was silent, although devoured with hunger.

Then the old woman went to the butcher's and bought a long piece of black pudding. She returned home, lighted a wood fire in her yard, and cooked this pudding. Semillante, excited, bounded about and frothed at the mouth, her eyes fixed upon the meat, the fumes of which entered her stomach.

Next the woman made a cravat for the straw man of this smoking sausage. She wound it many times about his neck, as if to make it penetrate him.

When this was done, she unchained the dog.

With a formidable leap, the beast reached the manikin's throat, and, her paws upon his shoulders, began to tear him to pieces. She fell back, a piece of her prey in her mouth, then leaped upon him again, sinking her teeth in the cords, snatching some particles of nourishment, fell back again, and rebounded enraged. She tore away the face with great blows of the teeth, tearing into shreds the whole neck.

The old woman, mute and motionless, looked on, her eyes lighting up. She rechained the beast, made him fast two days again, and repeated this strange operation.

For three months, she accustomed the dog to this kind of struggle, to a repast conquered by tooth and claw. She did not chain her now, but set her upon the manikin with a gesture.

She taught her to tear him, to devour him, even without anything eatable hung around his throat. She would give her afterward, as a recompense, the pudding she had cooked for her.

Whenever she perceived the manikin, Semillante growled and turned her eyes toward her mistress, who would cry: "Go!" in a whistling tone, at the same time raising her finger.

When she thought the right time had come, Mother Saverini went to confession and to communion one morning in ecstatic fervor; then, having clothed herself in male attire, so that she looked like a feeble, old man, she went with a Sardinian fisherman, who took her and her dog to the other side of the defile.

She had, in a sack of cloth, a large piece of pudding. Semillante had fasted for two days. Every few moments the old woman made her smell of the pleasant food and endeavored to excite her.

They entered into Longosardo. The Corsican went into a wine-shop. She presented herself at a baker's and asked where Nicholas Ravolati lived. He had taken his old trade, that of a carpenter. He was working alone at the back of his shop.

The old woman opened the door and called:

"Hey, Nicholas!"

He turned around; then, loosing the dog, she cried out:

"Go! go! Devour him! devour him!"

The animal, excited, threw herself upon him and seized him by the throat. The man extended his arms, clinched her, and rolled upon the floor. For some minutes he twisted himself, beating the soil with his feet; then he remained motionless, while Semillante dug at his neck until it was in shreds.

Two neighbors, seated before their doors, recalled perfectly having seen an old man go out of the shop, with a black dog at his side, which was eating, as he went along, something brown that his master gave him.

That evening, the old woman returned to her house. She slept well that night.

On the River

LAST summer I rented a cottage on the banks of the Seine, several miles from Paris, and I used to go out to it every evening. After a while, I formed the acquaintance of one of my neighbors, a man between thirty and forty years of age, who really was one of the queerest characters I ever have met. He was an old boating-man, crazy on the subject of boats, and was always either in, or on, or by the water. Surely he must have been born in a boat, and probably he will die in one, some day, while taking a last outing.

One evening, as we were walking along the edge of the river, I asked him to tell me about some of his nautical experiences. Immediately his face lighted up, and he became eloquent, almost poetical, for his heart was full of an

all-absorbing, irresistible, devouring passion—a love for the river.

"Ah!" said he, "how many recollections I have of the river that flows at our feet! You street-dwellers have no idea what the river really is. But let a fisherman pronounce the word. To him it means mystery, the unknown, a land of mirage and phantasmagoria, where odd things that have no real existence are seen at night and strange noises are heard; where one trembles without knowing the reason why, as when passing through a cemetery,—and indeed the river is a cemetery without graves.

"Land, for a fisherman, has boundaries, but the river, on moonless nights, appears to him unlimited. A sailor doesn't feel the same way about the sea. The sea is often cruel, but it roars

and foams, it gives us fair warning; the river is silent and treacherous. It flows stealthily, without a murmur, and the eternal gentle motion of the water is more awful to me than the big ocean waves.

"Dreamers believe that the deep hides immense lands of blue, where the drowned roll around among the big fish, in strange forests or in crystal caves. The river has only black depths, where the dead decay in the slime. But it's beautiful when the sun shines on it, and the waters splash softly on the banks covered with whispering reeds.

"In speaking of the ocean the poet says:

" 'Oh! what tragic tales of the vast, blue deep,—
The vast blue deep prayerful mothers fear,—
The sad waves tell, when at night, we hear,
Their ceaseless moanings in our sleep!'

Well, I believe that the stories the slender reeds tell one another in their wee, silvery voices are even more appalling than the ghastly tragedies related by the roaring waves.

"But as you have asked me to relate some of my recollections, I will tell you a strange adventure that happened to me here, about ten years ago.

"Then, as now, I lived in old mother Lafon's house and a chum of mine, Louis Bernet, who since has given up boating, as well as his happy-go-lucky ways, to become a State Councilor, was camping out in the village of C——, two miles away. We used to take dinner together every day, either at his place or at mine.

"One evening, as I was returning home alone, feeling rather tired, and with difficulty rowing the twelve-foot boat that I always took out at night, I stopped to rest a little while near that point over there, formed by reeds, about two hundred yards in front of the railway bridge. The weather was gorgeous; the moon shed a silvery light on the shining river, and the air was soft and still. The calmness of the surroundings tempted me, and I thought how pleasant it would be to fill my pipe here and smoke. The thought was immediately executed, and, laying hold of the anchor, I dropped it overboard. The boat, which was following the stream, slid to the end of the chain and came to a stop; I settled myself aft on a rug, as comfortably as I could. There was not a sound to be heard nor a movement to be seen, though sometimes I noticed the almost imperceptible rippling of the water on the banks, and watched the highest clumps of reeds, which at times assumed strange shapes that appeared to move.

The river was perfectly calm, but I was affected by the extraordinary stillness that enveloped me. The frogs and toads, the nocturnal musicians of the swamps, were voiceless. Suddenly, at my right, a frog croaked. I started; it stopped, and all was silent. I resolved to light my pipe for distraction. But, strange to say, though I was an inveterate smoker I failed to enjoy it, and after a few puffs I grew sick and stopped smoking. Then I began to hum an air, but the sound of my voice depressed me.

At last I lay down in the boat and watched the sky. For a while I re-

mained quiet, but presently the slight pitching of the boat disturbed me. I felt as if it were swaying to and fro from one side of the river to the other, and that an invisible force or being was drawing it slowly to the bottom and then raising it to let it drop again. I was knocked about as if in a storm; I heard strange noises; I jumped up; the water was shining and all was still. Then I knew that my nerves were slightly shaken, and decided to leave the river. I pulled on the chain. The boat moved along, but presently I felt some resistance and pulled harder. The anchor refused to come up; it had caught in something at the bottom and remained stuck. I pulled and tugged but to no avail. With the oars I turned the boat around and forced her up-stream, in order to alter the position of the anchor. This was all in vain, however, for the anchor did not yield; so in a rage, I began to shake at the chain, which wouldn't budge.

I sat down discouraged, to ponder over my mishap. It was impossible to break the chain or to separate it from the boat, as it was enormous and was riveted to a piece of wood as big as my arm; but as the weather continued fine, I did not doubt but that some fisherman would come along and rescue me. The accident calmed me so much that I managed to remain quiet and smoke my pipe. I had a bottle of rum with me so I drank two or three glasses of it and began to laugh at my situation. It was so warm that it would not have mattered much had I been obliged to spend all night out of doors.

Suddenly something jarred slightly against the side of the boat. I started,

and a cold sweat broke over me from head to foot. The noise was due to a piece of wood drifting along with the current, but it proved sufficient to disturb my mind, and once more I felt the same strange nervousness creep over me. The anchor remained firm. Exhausted, I seated myself again.

"Meantime the river was covering itself with a white mist that lay close to the water, so that when I stood up neither the stream, nor my feet, nor the boat, were visible to me; I could distinguish only the ends of the reeds and, a little further away, the meadow, ashen in the moonlight, with large black patches formed by groups of Italian poplars reaching toward the sky. I was buried up to my waist in something that looked like a blanket of down of a peculiar whiteness; and all kinds of fantastic visions arose before me. I imagined that some one was trying to crawl into the boat, which I could no longer see and that the river hidden under the thick fog was full of strange creatures that were swimming all around me. I felt a horrible depression steal over me, my temples throbbed, my heart beat wildly, and, losing all control over myself, I was ready to plunge overboard and swim to safety. But this idea suddenly filled me with horror. I imagined myself lost in the dense mist, floundering about aimlessly among the reeds and water-plants, unable to find the banks of the river or the boat; and I felt as if I should certainly be drawn by my feet to the bottom of the dark waters. As I really should have had to swim against the current for at least five hundred yards before reaching a spot where I could safely land, it was

nine chances to ten that, being unable to see in the fog, I should drown, although I was a fine swimmer.

"I tried to overcome my dread. I determined not to be afraid, but there was something in me besides my will and that something was faint-hearted. I asked myself what there was to fear; my courageous self railed at the other, the timid one; never before had I so fully realized the opposition that exists between the two beings we have in us; the one willing, the other resisting, and each one triumphing in turn. But this foolish and unaccountable fear was growing worse and worse, and was becoming positive terror. I remained motionless, with open eyes and straining ears, waiting. For what? I scarcely knew, but it must have been for something terrible. I believe that had a fish suddenly taken it into its head to jump out of the water, as frequently happens, I should have fallen in a dead faint. However, I managed to keep my senses after a violent effort to control myself. I took my bottle of brandy and again raised it to my lips.

"Suddenly I began to shout at the top of my voice, turning successively toward the four points of the horizon. After my throat had become completely paralyzed with shouting, I listened. A dog was barking in the distance.

"I drank some more rum and lay down in the bottom of the boat. I remained thus at least one hour, perhaps two, without shutting my eyes, visited by nightmares. I did not dare to sit up, though I had an insane desire to do so; I put it off from second to second, saying: 'Now then, I'll get up,' but I was afraid to move. At last I raised myself

with infinite care, as if my life depended on the slightest sound I might make, and peered over the edge of the boat. I was greeted by the most marvelous, stupendous sight that it is possible to imagine. It was a vision of fairyland, one of those phenomena that travelers in distant countries tell us about, but that we are unable to believe.

"The mist, which two hours ago hung over the water, had lifted and settled on the banks of the stream. It formed on each side an unbroken hill, six or seven yards in height, that shone in the moonlight with the dazzling whiteness of snow. Nothing could be seen but the flashing river, moving between the two white mountains, and overhead a full moon that illuminated the milky-blue sky.

"All the hosts of the water had awakened; the frogs were croaking dismally, while from time to time a toad sent its short, monotonous, and gloomy note to the stars. Strange to say, I was no longer frightened; I was surrounded by a landscape so utterly unreal that the strangest freaks of nature would not have surprised me at all.

"How long this situation lasted I am unable to tell, for I finally dozed off to sleep. When I awoke, the moon was gone and the sky was covered with clouds. The water splashed dismally, the wind was blowing, it was cold and completely dark. I finished the brandy and lay listening to the rustling of the reeds and the murmur of the river. I tried to see, but failed to distinguish the boat or even my hands, although I held them close to my eyes. The darkness, however, was slowly decreasing.

Suddenly I thought I saw a shadow glide past me. I shouted to it and a voice responded: it was a fisherman. I called to him and told him of my plight. He brought his boat alongside mine and both began tugging at the chain. The anchor still would not yield. A cold, rainy day was setting in, one of those days that bring disaster and sadness. I

perceived another boat, which we hailed. The owner added his strength to ours, and little by little the anchor gave way. It came up very slowly, laden with considerable weight. Finally a black heap appeared and we dragged it into my boat. It was the body of an old woman, with a big stone tied around her neck!"

Suicides

SCARCELY a day goes by without the newspapers containing an account like this:

"Tenants of No. 40 B — street were startled Wednesday night by the report of two shots that proceeded from the apartment occupied by Mr. X —. The door was burst open and he was found on the floor, in a pool of blood, his hand still grasping the revolver with which he committed suicide. Mr. X — was fifty-seven years old and prosperous. He had everything to live for, and no reason can be ascribed for his tragic act."

What grief and secret despair, what burning sorrows lead these people, who are supposed to be happy, to end their lives? Financial troubles and love tragedies are hinted at, but as nothing really precise ever becomes known, these deaths are pronounced "mysterious."

A letter that was found on the table of one of these suicides, who wrote it during his last night on earth, with the loaded pistol within his reach, has come into our possession. We deem it interesting, though it reveals no great tragedy

such as one usually expects to find at the bottom of these rash acts. It only tells of the slow succession of the little ills of life, of the inevitable disorganization of a solitary existence weaned from its illusions; it makes clear those tragic endings which no others but people of high-strung, supersensitive temperaments can understand.

This is the letter:

"It is midnight. When I finish this letter I intend to destroy myself. Why? I will endeavor to explain, not for those who read this, but for myself, in order to strengthen my failing courage and to convince myself of the now fatal necessity of my determination which, if not carried out to-night, could only be deferred.

"I was brought up by parents who believed in everything, and so I, too, believed. My dream lasted a long time. But now its last illusions have fled.

"The past few years have wrought a great change in me. The things that used to seem most alluring and desirable have lost their attraction. The true

meaning of life has dawned upon me in all its brutal reality; the true reason of love disgusts me even with poetical sentiment.

"We are nothing but the eternal toys of illusions as foolish as they are charming, which reblossom as soon as they fade.

"Getting on in years, I became resigned to the utter shallowness of life, to the uselessness of any effort, to the vanity of any hope, when suddenly to-night, after dinner, I viewed the futility of everything in a different light.

"Formerly I was happy. Everything charmed me; the women I met in the streets; the streets themselves; my own home; even the shape of my clothes was a subject of interest to me. But finally the repetition of these visions bored and annoyed me; I feel like a theater-goer seeing the same play night after night.

"During the last thirty years I have arisen at the same hour; have dined at the same place, eating the same things served at the same times by different waiters.

"I have tried to travel! But the sensation of forlornness that came over me in strange places deterred me. I felt so isolated and small on this immense earth that I hastened to return home.

"But the furnishings of my apartment, that have not been changed in thirty odd years, the worn places on the chairs which I recollect when they were new, even the odor of the place (for after a while each home acquires a distinctive atmosphere) gave me every night an awful, nauseating sense of melancholy.

"Does not everything repeat itself in an eternal, heartrending fashion? The way in which I put my key into the

latch-hole, the spot where I find the match-box, the first glance I give the room after striking a light, all these little things make me desire to fling myself out of the window, so as to end for good and all the series of monotonous incidents which fill life and from which there is no escape.

"Every day when shaving in front of my little mirror I feel like cutting my throat; the same face with soap on its cheeks that stares at me has driven me many a time to cry out from sheer despondency.

"To-day I hardly care to meet the people whose society I used to enjoy, because I know too well what they are going to say and what I shall reply; the trend of their thoughts is as familiar as the drift of their arguments. Each brain is like a circus-ring around which gallops a poor, imprisoned horse. No matter what our efforts or dodges may be, we cannot escape from the circular ring, which has no unexpected turns, no door opening on the unknown. We must go around forever, through the same joys, the same jokes, the same beliefs, habits, disgusts.

"The fog was dreadful to-night. It covered the boulevard, dimming the gas-lights that shone like so many smoky candles. A heavier weight than usual oppressed me. My digestion was probably in bad shape. A good digestion is a great blessing. It gives to artists inspiration, to thinkers clear ideas, to young men amorous desires, and to everyone happiness.

"It lets us eat our fill and, after all, this is the greatest satisfaction. A weak stomach predisposes one to scepticism and unbelief, and incites bad

dreams and morbidity. I have noticed it very, very often. Perhaps I would not care to die, to-night, if my digestion were perfect.

"When I seated myself in the chair in which I have sat every night the past thirty years, I glanced around and felt so depressed that I thought I should become distracted.

"I wondered how I could escape from myself? To be occupied appeared to me even more intolerable than to remain inactive. I had the idea of putting my old papers in order. I have intended to arrange them for a long time. For thirty years I have flung letters and bills together in the same drawer, and the confusion resulting therefrom has often caused me a great deal of trouble. But the mere idea of straightening out anything gives me such mental and physical distress that I never have had sufficient courage to undertake the odious task.

"So I sat down at my desk and opened it, intending to look over my old papers and to destroy some. At first I felt quite helpless before the heaps of yellowed leaves; but finally I extricated one of them.

"Never, if you value your life, dare touch the desk or the tomb that contains old letters! And if by chance you should open it, close your eyes so as to shut out the letters, lest a long-forgotten but suddenly recognized handwriting awaken a world of recollections; take the fatal pages and throw them into the fire, and when they are ashes stamp them into invisible dust or else you will be lost—as I have been—for the last hour.

"The first letters I picked out did not

interest me. They were from men I meet once in a while, and for whom I feel no great interest. But all at once an envelope attracted my eyes. It bore my name written in a broad, firm hand; tears filled my eyes. Here was a letter from my dearest friend, the one in whom I used to confide in my youth, and who knew my hopes; he arose before me so clearly with his outstretched hand and good-natured smile, that a shudder ran through my frame. Yes, the dead come back, for I saw him! Our memory is a world far more perfect than the real universe, for it brings to life those who have gone forever.

"With misty eyes and trembling hands I read over all the letters, while my poor crushed heart throbbed with a pain so acute that I groaned aloud like a man whose limbs are being tortured.

"I went over my whole life, and it was like floating along a familiar river. I recognized people whose names long ago had been blotted from my mind. Only their faces had stamped themselves upon my memory. My mother's letters revived recollections of the old servants of our household, brought back all the little insignificant details that impress themselves on a child's brain.

"Yes, I even saw my mother as she looked in the gowns of years ago, with the changed appearance she would assume with each new style of hair-dressing she successively adopted. She haunted me most in a silk gown of some gorgeous pattern, and I remembered what she said to me one day, wearing that robe: 'Robert, my child, if you fail to hold yourself erect, you will be round-shouldered all your life.'

"On opening another drawer, I suddenly gazed on my love trinkets—a satin slipper, a torn handkerchief, several locks of hair, some pressed flowers, even a garter.

"My romances, whose heroines, if still living, must have white hair, arose before me with all the bitterness of loved things forever gone. Oh! the young brows shaded by golden hair, the clasped hands, the speaking glances, the throbbing hearts, the smile that promises the lips, and the lips that promise all—then the first kiss—long, unending, with no thought but of the immense ecstasy to come!

"I grasped with both hands the cherished tokens and I kissed them passionately. My harassed soul beheld each one of my loves at the moment of sweet surrender—and I suffered worse torments than those imagined in the descriptions of hell.

"A single letter remained. It had

been written by me and was dictated fifty years ago by my teacher.

"It ran:

"MY DEAR MAMMA:

"I am seven years old to-day. As it is the age of reason, I want to thank you for having brought me into this world.

"Your loving little son,

"ROBERT."

"This was the last. I had arrived at the very beginning of my life and I turned to face the prospect of the remaining years. I see nothing but a hideous and lonely old age with all its accompanying disablements—all is over, over, over! Nobody to care for me.

"The revolver lies here on the table. I am loading it— Never read over your old letters."

And this is the reason why so many men kill themselves, while one searches their lives in vain for the discovery of some hidden tragedy.

A Miracle

DOCTOR BONENFANT was searching his memory, saying, half aloud: "A Christmas story—some remembrance of Christmas?"

Suddenly he cried: "Yes, I have one, and a strange one too; it is a fantastic story. I have seen a miracle! yes, ladies, a miracle, and on Christmas night."

It astonishes you to hear me speak thus, a man who believes scarcely anything. Nevertheless, I have seen a miracle! I have seen it, I tell you, seen, with my own eyes, that is what I call seeing.

Was I very much surprised, you ask? Not at all; because if I do not believe from your view point, I believe in faith, and I know that it can remove mountains. I could cite many examples; but I might make you indignant, and I should risk diminishing the effect of my story.

In the first place, I must confess that if I have not been convinced and converted by what I have seen, I have at least been strongly moved; and I am going to strive to tell it to you naively, as if I had the credulity of an Auvergnat.

I was then a country doctor, living in the town of Rolleville, on the plains of Normandy. The winter that year was terrible. By the end of November the snow came after a week of heavy frosts. One could see from afar the great snow clouds coming from the north, and then the descent of the white flakes commenced. In one night the whole plain was in its winding-sheet. Farms, isolated in their square inclosures, behind their curtains of great trees powdered with hoar-frost, seemed to sleep under the accumulation of this thick, light covering.

No noise could reach this dead country. The crows alone in large flocks outlined long festoons in the sky, living their lives to no purpose, swooping down upon the livid fields and picking at the snow with their great beaks. There was nothing to be heard but the vague, continued whisper of this white powder as it persistently fell. This lasted for eight days and then stopped. The earth had on its back a mantle five feet in thickness. And, during the next three weeks, a sky spread itself out over this smooth, white mass, hard and glistening with frost, which was clear blue crystal by day, and at night all studded with stars, as if the hoar-frost grew by their light.

The plain, the hedges, the elms of the inclosures, all seemed dead, killed by the cold. Neither man nor beast went out. Only the chimneys of the cottages, clothed in white linen, revealed concealed life by the fine threads of smoke which mounted straight into the frosty air. From time to time one heard the trees crack, as if their wooden limbs were breaking under the bark. And sometimes a great branch would detach

itself and fall, the resistless cold petrifying the sap and breaking the fibers. Dwellings set here and there in fields seemed a hundred miles away from one another. One lived as he could. I alone endeavored to go to my nearest clients, constantly exposing myself to the danger of remaining in some hole in the winding-sheet of snow.

I soon perceived that a mysterious terror had spread over the country. Such a plague, they thought, was not natural. They pretended that they heard voices at night, and sharp whistling and cries, as of some one passing. These cries and the whistles came, without doubt, from emigrant birds which traveled at twilight and flew in flocks toward the south. But it was impossible to make this frightened people listen to reason. Fear had taken possession of their minds, and they listened to every extraordinary event.

The forge of Father Vatinel was situated at the end of the hamlet of Epivent, on the highway, now invisible and deserted. As the people needed bread, the blacksmith resolved to go to the village. He remained some hours chattering with the inhabitants of the six houses which formed the center of the country, took his bread and his news and a little of the fear which had spread over the region and set out before night.

Suddenly, in skirting a hedge, he believed he saw an egg on the snow; yes, an egg was lying there, all white like the rest of the world. He bent over it, and in fact it was an egg. Where did it come from? What hen could have gone out there and laid an egg in that spot? The smith was astonished; he

could not comprehend it; but he picked it up and took it to his wife.

"See, wife, here is an egg that I found on the way."

The woman tossed her head, replying:

"An egg on the way? And this kind of weather! You must be drunk, surely."

"No, no, my lady, it surely was at the foot of the hedge, and not frozen but still warm. Take it; I put it in my bosom so that it wouldn't cool off. You shall have it for your dinner."

The egg was soon shining in the saucepan where the soup was simmering, and the smith began to relate what he had heard around the country. The woman listened, pale with excitement.

"Surely I have heard some whistling," said she, "but it seemed to come from the chimney."

They sat down to table, ate their soup first and then, while the husband was spreading the butter on his bread, the woman took the egg and examined it with suspicious eye.

"And if there should be something in this egg," said she.

"What, think you, you would like to have in it?"

"I know very well."

"Go ahead and eat it. Don't be a fool."

She opened the egg. It was like all eggs, and very fresh. She started to eat it but hesitated, tasting, then leaving, then tasting it again. The husband said:

"Well, how does it taste, that egg?"

She did not answer, but finished swallowing it. Then, suddenly, she set her eyes on her husband, fixed, haggard, and excited, raised her arms, turned and twisted them, convulsed from head to

foot, and rolled on the floor, sending forth horrible shrieks. All night she struggled in these frightful spasms, trembling with fright, deformed by hideous convulsions. The smith, unable to restrain her, was obliged to bind her. And she screamed without ceasing, with voice indefatigable:

"I have it in my body! I have it in my body!"

I was called the next day. I ordered all the sedatives known, but without effect. She was mad. Then, with incredible swiftness, in spite of the obstacle of deep snow, the news, the strange news ran from farm to farm: "The smith's wife is possessed!" And they came from all about, not daring to go into the house, to listen to the cries of the frightened woman, whose voice was so strong that one could scarcely believe it belonged to a human creature.

The curate of the village was sent for. He was a simple old priest. He came in surplice, as if to administer comfort to the dying, and pronounced with extended hands some formulas of exorcism, while four men held the foaming, writhing woman on the bed. But the spirit was not driven out.

Christmas came without any change in the weather. In the early morning the priest came for me.

"I wish," said he, "to ask you to assist me to-night at a service for this unfortunate woman. Perhaps God will work a miracle in her favor at the same hour that he was born of a woman."

I replied: "I approve heartily, M. l'Abbé, but if the spell is to be broken by ceremony (and there could be no

more propitious time to start it) she can be saved without remedies."

The old priest murmured: "You are not a believer, Doctor, but aid me, will you not?" I promised him my aid.

The evening came, and then the night. The clock of the church was striking, throwing its plaintive voice across the extent of white, glistening snow. Some black figures were wending their way slowly in groups, drawn by the bronze call from the bell. The full moon shone with a dull, wan light at the edge of the horizon, rendering more visible the desolation of the fields. I had taken four robust men with me, and with them repaired to the forge.

The Possessed One shouted continually, although bound to her bed. They had clothed her properly, in spite of her resistance, and now they brought her out. The church was full of people, illuminated but cold; the choir chanted their monotonous notes; the serpent hummed; the little bell of the acolyte tinkled, regulating the movements of the faithful.

I had shut the woman and her guards into the kitchen of the parish house and awaited the movement that I believed favorable.

I chose the time immediately following communion. All the peasants, men and women, had received their God, resolving to submit to the severity of His will. A great silence prevailed while the priest finished the divine mystery. Upon my order, the door opened and the four men brought in the mad woman.

When she saw the lights, the crowd on their knees, the choir illuminated, and the gilded tabernacle, she struggled with

such vigor that she almost escaped from us, and she gave forth cries so piercing that a shiver of fright ran through the church. All bowed their heads; some fled. She had no longer the form of a woman, her hands being distorted, her countenance drawn, her eyes protruding. They held her up until after the march of the choir, and then allowed her to squat on the floor.

Finally, the priest arose; he waited. When there was a moment of quiet, he took in his hands a silver vessel with bands of gold, upon which was the consecrated white wafer and, advancing some steps, extended both arms above his head and presented it to the frightened stare of the maniac. She continued to shout, but with eyes fixed upon the shining object. And the priest remained thus, motionless, as if he had been a statue.

This lasted a long, long time. The woman seemed seized with fear, fascinated; she looked fixedly at the bright vessel, trembled violently but at intervals, and cried out incessantly, but with a less piercing voice.

It happened that she could no longer lower her eyes; that they were riveted on the Host; that she could no longer groan; that her body became pliable and that she sank down exhausted. The crowd was prostrate, brows to earth.

The Possessed One now lowered her eyelids quickly, then raised them again, as if powerless to endure the sight of her God. She was silent. And then I myself perceived that her eyes were closed. She slept the sleep of the somnambulist, the hypnotist—pardon! con-

quered by the contemplation of the silver vessel with the bands of gold, overcome by the Christ victorious.

They carried her out, inert, while the priest returned to the altar. The assistants, thrown into wonderment, intoned a "Te Deum."

The smith's wife slept for the next four hours; then she awoke without any

remembrance either of the possession or of the deliverance. This, ladies, is the miracle that I saw.

Doctor Bonenfant remained silent for a moment, then he added, in rather disagreeable voice:

"And I could never refuse to swear to it in writing."

The Accursed Bread

DADDY TAILLE had three daughters: Anna, the eldest, who was scarcely ever mentioned in the family; Rose, the second girl, who was eighteen; and Clara, the youngest, who was a girl of fifteen.

Old Taille was a widower, and a foreman in M. Lebrument's button-manufactory. He was a very upright man, very well thought of, abstemious; in fact a sort of model workman. He lived at Havre, in the Rue d'Angoulême.

When Anna ran away the old man flew into a fearful rage. He threatened to kill the seducer, who was head clerk in a large draper's establishment in that town. Then when he was told by various people that she was keeping very steady and investing money in government securities, that she was no gada-bout, but was maintained by a Monsieur Dubois, who was a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, the father was appeased.

He even showed some anxiety as to how she was faring, asked some of her old friends who had been to see her how she was getting on; and when told that she had her own furniture, and that

her mantelpiece was covered with vases and the walls with pictures, that there were clocks and carpets everywhere, he gave a broad, contented smile. He had been working for thirty years to get together a wretched five or six thousand francs. This girl was evidently no fool.

One fine morning the son of Touchard, the cooper at the other end of the street, came and asked him for the hand of Rose, the second girl. The old man's heart began to beat, for the Touchards were rich and in a good position. He was decidedly lucky with his girls.

The marriage was agreed upon. It was settled that it should be a grand affair, and the wedding dinner was to be held at Sainte-Adresse, at Mother Lusa's restaurant. It would cost a lot certainly; but never mind, it did not matter just for once in a way.

But one morning, just as the old man was going home to breakfast with his two daughters, the door opened suddenly and Anna appeared. She was elegantly dressed, wore rings and an expensive bonnet, and looked undeniably pretty and nice. She threw her arms

round her father's neck before he could say a word, then fell into her sisters' arms with many tears, and then asked for a plate, so that she might share the family soup. Taille was moved to tears in his turn and said several times:

"That is right, dear; that is right."

Then she told them about herself. She did not wish Rose's wedding to take place at Sainte-Adresse,—certainly not. It should take place at her house, and would cost her father nothing. She had settled everything, so it was "no good to say any more about it,—there!"

"Very well, my dear! very well!" the old man said, "we will leave it so." But then he felt some doubt. Would the Touchards consent? But Rose, the bride-elect, was surprised, and asked, "Why should they object, I should like to know? Just leave that to me, I will talk to Philip about it."

She mentioned it to her lover the very same day, and he declared that it would suit him exactly. Father and Mother Touchard were naturally delighted at the idea of a good dinner which would cost them nothing and said:

"You may be quite sure that everything will be in first-rate style, as M. Dubois is made of money."

They asked to be allowed to bring a friend, Mme. Florence, the cook on the first floor, and Anna agreed to everything. The wedding was fixed for the last Tuesday of the month.

II.

After the civil formalities and the religious ceremony the wedding party went to Anna's house. Among those whom the Tailles had brought was a cousin of a certain age, a M. Sauvetanin, a man

given to philosophical reflections, serious, and always very self-possessed, and Mme. Lamonoois, an old aunt.

M. Sauvetanin had been told off to give Anna his arm, as they were looked upon as the two most important persons in the company.

As soon as they had arrived at the door of Anna's house she let go her companion's arm, and ran on ahead, saying, "I will show you the way," while the invited guests followed more slowly. When they got upstairs, she stood on one side to let them pass, and they rolled their eyes and turned their heads in all directions to admire this mysterious and luxurious dwelling.

The table was laid in the drawing-room as the dining-room had been thought too small. Extra knives, forks, and spoons had been hired from a neighboring restaurant, and decanters full of wine glittered under the rays of the sun, which shone in through the window.

The ladies went into the bedroom to take off their shawls and bonnets, and Father Touchard, who was standing at the door, squinted at the low, wide bed, and made funny signs to the men, with many a wink and nod. Daddy Taille, who thought a great deal of himself, looked with fatherly pride at his child's well-furnished rooms, and went from one to the other holding his hat in his hand, making a mental inventory of everything, and walking like a verger in a church.

Anna went backward and forward, and ran about giving orders and hurrying on the wedding feast. Soon she appeared at the door of the dining-room, and cried: "Come here, all of you, for a moment," and when the twelve guests

did as they were asked they saw twelve glasses of Madeira on a small table.

Rose and her husband had their arms round each other's waists, and were kissing each other in every corner. M. Sauvetanin never took his eyes off Anna; he no doubt felt that ardor, that sort of expectation which all men, even if they are old and ugly, feel for women of a certain stamp.

They sat down, and the wedding breakfast began; the relatives sitting at one end of the table and the young people at the other. Mme. Touchard, the mother, presided on the right and the bride on the left. Anna looked after everybody, saw that the glasses were kept filled and the plates well supplied. The guests evidently felt a certain respectful embarrassment at the sight of the sumptuousness of the rooms and at the lavish manner in which they were treated. They all ate heartily of the good things provided, but there were no jokes such as are prevalent at weddings of that sort; it was all too grand, and it made them feel uncomfortable. Old Madame Touchard, who was fond of a bit of fun, tried to enliven matters a little and at the beginning of the dessert she exclaimed: "I say, Philip, do sing us something." The neighbors in their street considered that he had the finest voice in all Havre.

The bride-groom got up, smiled, and turning to his sister-in-law, from politeness and gallantry, tried to think of something suitable for the occasion, something serious and correct, to harmonize with the seriousness of the repast.

Anna had a satisfied look on her face, and leaned back in her chair to listen,

and all assumed looks of attention, though prepared to smile should smiles be called for.

The singer announced, "The Accursed Bread," and extending his right arm, which made his coat ruck up into his neck, he began.

It was decidedly long, three verses of eight lines each, with the last line and the last line but one repeated twice.

All went well for the first two verses; they were the usual commonplaces about bread gained by honest labor and by dishonesty. The aunt and the bride wept outright. The cook, who was present, at the end of the first verse looked at a roll which she held in her hand with moist eyes, as if they applied to her, while all applauded vigorously. At the end of the second verse the two servants, who were standing with their backs to the wall, joined loudly in the chorus, and the aunt and the bride wept outright. Daddy Taille blew his nose with the noise of a trombone, old Touchard brandished a whole loaf half over the table, and the cook shed silent tears on to the crust which she was still holding.

Amid the general emotion M. Sauvetanin said:

"That is the right sort of song; very different to the pointed things one generally hears at weddings."

Anna, who was visibly affected, kissed her hand to her sister and pointed to her husband with an affectionate nod, as if to congratulate her.

Intoxicated by his success, the young man continued, and unfortunately the last verse contained words about the bread of dishonor gained by young girls

who had been led astray from the paths of virtue. No one took up the refrain about this bread, supposed to be eaten with tears, except old Touchard and the two servants. Anna had grown deadly pale and cast down her eyes, while the bridegroom looked from one to the other without understanding the reason for this sudden coldness, and the cook hastily dropped the crust as if it were poisoned.

M. Sauvetanin said solemnly, in order to save the situation: "That last couplet is not at all necessary"; and Daddy Taille, who had got red up to his ears, looked round the table fiercely.

Then Anna, with her eyes swimming in tears, told the servants, in the falter-

ing voice of a woman trying to stifle her sobs, to bring the champagne.

All the guests were suddenly seized with exuberant joy, and their faces became radiant again. And when old Touchard, who had seen, felt, and understood nothing of what was going on, and, pointing to the guests so as to emphasize his words, sang the last words of the refrain: "Children, I warn you all to eat not of that bread," the whole company, when they saw the champagne bottles with their necks covered with gold foil appear, burst out singing, as if electrified by the sight:

"Children, I warn you all to eat not of that bread."

My Twenty-five Days

I HAD just taken possession of my room in the hotel, a narrow apartment between two papered partitions, so that I could hear all the sounds made by my neighbors. I was beginning to arrange in the glass cupboard my clothes and my linen, when I opened the drawer which was in the middle of this piece of furniture, I immediately noticed a manuscript of rolled paper. Having unrolled it, I spread it open before me, and read this title:

"MY TWENTY-FIVE DAYS."

It was the diary of a bather, of the last occupant of my room, and had been left behind there in forgetfulness at the hour of departure.

These notes may be of some interest to sensible and healthy persons who never leave their own homes. It is for

their benefit that I here transcribe them without altering a letter.

"CHÂTEL-GUYON, July 15.

"At the first glance, it is not gay, this country. So, I am going to spend twenty-five days here to have my liver and my stomach treated, and to get rid of flesh. The twenty-five days of a bather are very like the twenty-eight days of a *reserviste*; they are all devoted to fatigue-duty, severe fatigue-duty. To-day, nothing as yet; I am installed; I have made the acquaintance of locality and the doctors. Châtel-Guyon is composed of a stream in which flows yellow water, in the midst of several mountain-peaks, where are erected a Casino, houses, and stone-crosses. At the side of the stream, in the depths of the valley, may be seen a square building surrounded by a little

garden: this is the establishment of the baths. Sad people wander around this building—the invalids. A great silence reigns in these walks shaded by trees, this is not a pleasure-station but a true health-station: you take care of your health here through conviction, but you cannot get cured, it seems.

“Competent people declare that the mineral springs perform true miracles here. However, no votive offering is hung around the cashier’s office.

“From time to time, a gentleman or a lady comes over to a kiosk with a slate roof, which shelters a woman of smiling and gentle aspect and a spring boiling in a basin of cement. Not a word is exchanged between the invalid and the female custodian of the healing water. She hands to the newcomer a little glass in which air-bubbles quiver in the transparent liquid. The other drinks and goes off with a grave step in order to resume his interrupted walk under the trees.

“No noise in the little park, no breath of air in the leaves, no voice breaks through this silence. Inscribed over the entrance to this district should be: ‘Here you no longer laugh; you nurse yourself.’

“The people who chat resemble mutes who open their mouths in order to simulate sounds, so much are they afraid of letting their voices escape.

“In the hotel, the same silence. It is a big hotel where you dine solemnly with people of good position, who have nothing to say to each other. Their manners bespeak good-breeding and their faces reflect the conviction of a superiority of which it would be difficult to give actual proof.

“At two o’clock, I make my way up

to the Casino, a little wooden hut perched on a hillock to which one climbs by paths frequented by goats. But the view from that height is admirable. Châtel-Guyon is situated in a very narrow valley, exactly between the plain and the mountains. At the left I see the first great waves of the mountains of Auvergne covered with woods, exhibiting here and there big gray spots, their hard lava-bones, for we are at the foot of the extinct volcanoes. At the right, through the narrow slope of the valley, I discover a plain infinite as the sea, steeped in a bluish fog which lets one only dimly discern the villages, the towns, the yellow fields of ripe corn, and the green square of meadow-land shaded with appletreès. It is the Limagne, immense and flat, always enveloped in a light veil of vapor.

“The night has come. And now, after having dined alone, I write these lines beside my open window. I hear, over there, in front of me, the little orchestra of the Casino, which plays airs just as a wild bird sings all alone in the desert.

“From time to time a dog barks. This great calm does me good. Good night.

“*July 16.* Nothing. I have taken a bath, or rather a douche. I have swallowed three glasses of water and I have walked in the pathways of the park for a quarter of an hour between each glass, then half-an-hour after the last. I have begun my twenty-five days.

“*July 17.* Remarked two mysterious pretty women who are taking their baths and their meals after everyone else.

“*July 18.* Nothing.

“*July 19.* Saw the two pretty women again. They have style and a

little indescribable air which I like very much.

"*July 20.* Long walk in a charming wooded valley as far as the Hermitage of Sans-Souci. This country is delightful though sad; it is so calm, so sweet, so green. Along the mountain-roads you meet the long wagons loaded with hay drawn by two cows at a slow pace or held back in descending the slopes by their straining heads, which are tied together. A man with a big black hat on his head is driving them with a slight switch, tipping them on the side or on the forehead; and often with an ample gesture, a gesture energetic and grave, he suddenly draws them up when the excessive load hastens their journey down the rougher descents.

"The air is good in these valleys. And, if it is very warm, the dust bears with it a light odor of vanilla and of the stable, for so many cows pass over these routes that they leave a little scent everywhere. And the odor is a perfume, whereas it would be a stench if it came from other animals.

"*July 21.* Excursion to the valley of the Enval. It is a narrow gorge inclosed in superb rocks at the very foot of the mountain. A stream flows through the space between the heaped-up boulders.

"As I reached the bottom of this ravine, I heard women's voices, and I soon perceived the two mysterious ladies of my hotel, who were chatting seated on a stone.

"The occasion appeared to me a good one, and without hesitation I presented myself. My overtures were received without embarrassment. We walked back together to the hotel. And we

talked about Paris. They knew, it seemed, many people whom I knew too. Who can they be?

"I shall see them to-morrow. There is nothing more amusing than such meetings as this.

"*July 22.* Day almost entirely passed with the two unknown ladies. They are very pretty, by Jove, one a brunette and the other a blonde. They say they are widows. Hum!

"I offered to accompany them in a visit to Royat to-morrow, and they accepted my offer.

"Châtel-Guyon is less sad than I thought on my arrival.

"*July 23.* Day spent at Royat. Royat is a little cluster of hotels at the bottom of a valley, at the gate of Clermont-Ferrand. A great deal of society there. A great park full of movement. Superb view of the Puy-de-Dôme, seen at the end of a perspective of vales.

"I am greatly occupied with my fair companions, which is flattering to myself. The man who escorts a pretty woman always believes himself crowned with an aureole,—with much more reason, therefore, the man who goes along with one on each side of him. Nothing is so pleasant as to dine in a restaurant well frequented, with a female companion at whom everybody stares, and besides there is nothing better calculated to set a man up in the estimation of his neighbors.

"To go to the Bois in a trap drawn by a sorry nag, or to go out into the boulevard escorted by a plain woman, are the two most humiliating accidents which could strike a delicate heart preoccupied with the opinions of others. Of all luxuries woman is the rarest and the

most distinguished; she is the one that costs most, and which we desire most; she is, therefore, the one that we like best to exhibit under the jealous eyes of the public.

"To show the world a pretty woman leaning on your arm is to excite, all at once, every kind of jealousy. It is as much as to say: Look here! I am rich, since I possess this rare and costly object; I have taste, since I have known how to discover this pearl; perhaps even I am loved, unless I am deceived by her, which would still prove that others, too, consider her charming.

"But what a disgraceful thing it is to bring an ugly woman with you through the city! And how many humiliating things this gives people to understand!

"In the first place, they assume she must be your wife, for how could it be supposed that you would have an unattractive mistress? A real wife might be ungraceful; but then her ugliness suggests a thousand things disagreeable to you. One supposes you must be a notary or a magistrate, as those two professions have a monopoly of grotesque and well-dowered spouses. Now, is this not painful for a man? And then it seems to proclaim to the public that you have the odious courage, and are even under a legal obligation, to caress that ridiculous face and that ill-shaped body, and that you will, without doubt, be shameless enough to make a mother of this by no means desirable being,—which is the very height of ridicule.

"*July 24.* I never leave the side of the two unknown widows, whom I am beginning to know well. This country is delightful and our hotel is excellent.

Good season. The treatment has done me an immense amount of good.

"*July 25.* Drive in a landau to the lake of Tazenat. An exquisite and unexpected party, decided on at lunch. Abrupt departure after getting up from the table. After a long journey through the mountains, we suddenly perceived an admirable little lake, quite round, quite blue, clear as glass, and situated at the bottom of a dead crater. One edge of this immense basin is barren, the other is wooded. In the midst of the trees is a small house, where sleeps a good-natured, intellectual man, a sage who passes his days in this Virgilian region. He opens his dwelling for us. An idea comes into my head. I exclaim: 'Suppose we bathe?'

"'Yes,' they said, 'but—costumes?'

"'Bah! we are in the desert.'

"And we did bathe!

"If I were a poet, how I would describe this unforgettable vision of bodies young and naked in the transparency of the water! The sloping high sides shut in the lake, motionless, glittering, and round, like a piece of silver; the sun pours into it its warm light in a flood; and along the rocks the fair flesh slips into the almost invisible wave in which the swimmers seemed suspended. On the sand at the bottom of the lake we saw the shadows of the light movements passing and repassing!

"*July 26.* Some persons seemed to look with shocked and disapproving eyes at my rapid intimacy with the two fair widows! Persons so constituted imagine that life is made for worrying oneself. Everything that appears to be amusing becomes immediately a breach of good-breeding or morality. For them

duty has inflexible and mortally sad rules.

"I would draw their attention with all respect to the fact that duty is not the same for Mormons, Arabs, Zulus, Turks, Englishmen, and Frenchmen; and that one will find very virtuous people among all those nations. As for me, I take a little off each people's notion of duty, and of the whole I make a result comparable to the morality of holy King Solomon.

"*July 27.* Good news. I have grown 620 grams thinner. Excellent, this water of Châtel-Guyon! I am bringing the widows to dine at Riom. Sad town! Its anagram constitutes an offense in the vicinity of healing springs: Riom, Mori.

"*July 28.* Hoity-toity! My two widows have been visited by two gentlemen who came to look for them. Two widows, without doubt. They are leaving this evening. They have written to me on fancy note-paper.

"*July 29.* Alone! Long excursion on foot to the extinct crater of Nackère. Splendid view.

"*July 30.* Nothing. I am taking the treatment.

"*July 31.* Ditto. Ditto. This pretty country is full of polluted streams. I am drawing the notice of the municipality to the abominable sink which poisons the road in front of the hotel. All the remains of the kitchen of the establishment are thrown into it. This is a good way to breed cholera.

"*August 1.* Nothing. The treatment.

"*August 2.* Admirable walk to Châteauneuf, a station for rheumatic patients where everybody is lame. Nothing

can be queerer than this population of cripples!

"*August 3.* Nothing. The treatment.

"*August 4.* Ditto. Ditto.

"*August 5.* Ditto. Ditto.

"*August 6.* Despair! I have just weighed myself. I have got fatter by 310 grams. But what then?

"*August 7.* 66 kilometers in a carriage in the mountain. I will not mention the name of the country through respect for its women.

"This excursion had been pointed out to me as a beautiful one, and one that was rarely made. After four hours on the road I arrived at a rather pretty village, on the border of a river in the midst of an admirable wood of walnut-trees. I had not yet seen a forest of walnut-trees of such dimensions in Auvergne. It constitutes, moreover, all the wealth of the district, for it is planted on the common. This common was formerly only a hillside covered with brushwood. The authorities had tried in vain to get it cultivated. It was scarcely enough to feed a few sheep.

"To-day it is a superb wood, thanks to the women, and it has a curious name: it is called—'the Sins of the Curé.'

"Now it is right to say that the women of the mountain district have the reputation of being light, lighter than in the plain. A bachelor who meets them owes them at least a kiss; and if he does not take more, he is only a blockhead. If we think rightly on it, this way of looking at the matter is the only one that is logical and reasonable. As woman, whether she be of the town or the country, has for her natural mission to please man, man should always prove that she pleases him. If he abstains from

every sort of demonstration, this means that he has found her ugly; it is almost an insult to her. If I were a woman, I would not receive a second time a man who failed to show me respect at our first meeting, for I would consider that he had failed to appreciate my beauty, my charm, and my feminine qualities.

"So the bachelors of the village X—often proved to the women of the district that they found them to their taste, and, as the curé was unable to prevent these demonstrations as gallant as they were natural, he resolved to utilize them for the profit of the natural prosperity. So he imposed as a penance on every woman who had gone wrong a walnut to be planted on the common. And every night lanterns were seen moving about like will-o'-the-wisps on the hillock, for the erring ones scarcely liked to perform their penances in broad daylight.

"In two years there was no room any longer on the lands belonging to the village; and to-day they calculate that there are more than three thousand trees

around the belfry which rings for the offices through their foliage. These are 'the Sins of the Curé.'

"Since we have been seeking for so many plans for rewooding in France, the Administration of Forests might surely enter into some arrangement with the clergy to employ a method so simple as that employed by this humble curé.

"August 8. Treatment.

"August 9. I am packing up my trunks, and saying good-bye to the charming little district so calm and silent, to the green mountain, to the quiet valleys, to the deserted Casino from which you can see, almost veiled by its light, bluish mist, the immense plain of the Limagne.

"I shall leave to-morrow."

* * * * *

Here the manuscript stopped. I wish to add nothing to it, my impressions of the country not having been exactly the same as those of my predecessor. For I did not find the two widows!

A Lucky Burglar

THEY were seated in the dining-room of a hotel in Barbizon.

"I tell you, you will not believe it."

"Well, tell it anyhow."

"All right, here goes. But first I must tell you that my story is absolutely true in every respect; even if it does sound improbable." And the old artist commenced:

"We had dined at Soriel's that night.

When I say dined, that means that we were all pretty well tipsy. We were three young madcaps. Soriel (poor fellow! he is dead now), Le Poittevin, the marine painter, and myself. Le Poittevin is dead, also.

"We had stretched ourselves on the floor of the little room adjoining the studio and the only one in the crowd who was rational was Le Poittevin.

Soriel, who was always the maddest, lay flat on his back, with his feet propped up on a chair, discussing war and the uniforms of the Empire, when, suddenly, he got up, took out of the big wardrobe where he kept his accessories a complete hussar's uniform and put it on. He then took a grenadier's uniform and told Le Poittevin to put it on; but he objected, so we forced him into it. It was so big for him that he was completely lost in it. I arrayed myself as a cuirassier. After we were ready, Soriel made us go through a complicated drill. Then he exclaimed: 'As long as we are troopers let us drink like troopers.'

"The punch-bowl had been brought out and filled for the second time. We were bawling some old camp songs at the top of our voice, when Le Poittevin, who in spite of all the punch had retained his self-control, held up his hand and said: 'Hush! I am sure I heard some one walking in the studio.'

"'A burglar!' said Soriel, staggering to his feet. 'Good luck!' And he began the 'Marseillaise':

"'To arms, citizens!'

"Then he seized several weapons from the wall and equipped us according to our uniforms. I received a musket and a saber. Le Poittevin was handed an enormous gun with a bayonet attached. Soriel, not finding just what he wanted, seized a pistol, stuck it in his belt, and brandishing a battle-axe in one hand, he opened the studio door cautiously. The army advanced. Having reached the middle of the room, Soriel said:

"'I am general. You [pointing to me], the cuirassiers, will keep the enemy from retreating—that is, lock the door.

You [pointing to Le Poittevin], the grenadiers, will be my escort.'

"I executed my orders and rejoined the troops, who were behind a large screen reconnoitering. Just as I reached it I heard a terrible noise. I rushed up with the candle to investigate the cause of it and this is what I saw. Le Poittevin was piercing the dummy's breast with his bayonet and Soriel was splitting his head open with his axe! When the mistake had been discovered the General commanded: 'Be cautious!'

"We had explored every nook and corner of the studio for the past twenty minutes without success, when Le Poittevin thought he would look in the cupboard. As it was quite deep and very dark, I advanced with the candle and looked in. I drew back stupefied. A man, a real live man this time, stood there looking at me! I quickly recovered myself, however, and locked the cupboard door. We then retired a few paces to hold a council.

"Opinions were divided. Soriel wanted to smoke the burglar out; Le Poittevin suggested starvation, and I proposed to blow him up with dynamite. Le Poittevin's idea being finally accepted as the best, we proceed to bring the punch and pipes into the studio, while Le Poittevin kept guard with his big gun on his shoulder, and settling ourselves in front of the cupboard we drank the prisoner's health. We had done this repeatedly, when Soriel suggested that we bring out the prisoner and take a look at him.

"'Hooray!' cried I. We picked up our weapons and made a mad rush for the cupboard door. It was finally opened, and Soriel, cocking his pistol which was not loaded, rushed in first.

Le Poittevin and I followed yelling like lunatics and, after a mad scramble in the dark, we at last brought out the burglar. He was a haggard-looking, white-hired old bandit, with shabby, ragged clothes. We bound him hand and foot and dropped him in an arm-chair. He said nothing.

"'We will try this wretch' said Soriel, whom the punch had made very solemn. I was so far gone that it seemed to me quite a natural thing. Le Poittevin was named for the defense and I for the prosecution. The prisoner was condemned to death by all except his counsel.

"'We will now execute him,' said Soriel. 'Still, this man cannot die without repenting,' he added, feeling somewhat scrupulous. 'Let us send for a priest.'

"I objected that it was too late, so he proposed that I officiate and forthwith told the prisoner to confess his sins to me. The old man was terrified. He wondered what kind of wretches we were and for the first time he spoke. His voice was hollow and cracked:

"'Say, you don't mean it, do you?'

"Soriel forced him to his knees, and for fear he had not been baptized, poured a glass of rum over his head, saying: 'Confess your sins; your last hour has come!'

"'Help! Help!' screamed the old man rolling himself on the floor and kicking everything that came his way. For fear he should wake the neighbors we gagged him.

"'Come, let us end this'; said Soriel impatiently. He pointed his pistol at the old man and pressed the trigger. I followed his example, but as neither of

our guns were loaded we made very little noise. Le Poittevin, who had been looking on said:

"'Have we really the right to kill this man?'

"'We have condemned him to death!' said Soriel.

"'Yes, but we have no right to shoot a civilian. Let us take him to the station-house.'

"We agreed with him, and as the old man could not walk we tied him to a board, and Le Poittevin and I carried him, while Soriel kept guard in the rear. We arrived at the station-house. The chief, who knew us and was well acquainted with our manner of joking, thought it was a great lark and laughingly refused to take our prisoner in. Soriel insisted, but the chief told us very sternly to quit our fooling and go home and be quiet. There was nothing else to do but to take him back to Soriel's.

"'What are we going to do with him?' I asked.

"'The poor man must be awfully tired!' said Le Poittevin, sympathizingly.

"He did look half dead, and in my turn I felt a sudden pity for him (the punch, no doubt), and I relieved him of his gag.

"'How do you feel old man?' I asked.

"'By Jingo! I have enough of this,' he groaned.

"Then Soriel softened. He unbound him and treated him as a long-lost friend. The three of us immediately brewed a fresh bowl of punch. As soon as it was ready we handed a glass to the prisoner, who quaffed it without flinching. Toast followed toast. The old man could

drink more than the three of us put together; but as daylight appeared, he got up and calmly said: 'I shall be obliged to leave you; I must get home now.'

"We begged him not to go, but he

positively refused to stay any longer. We were awfully sorry and took him to the door, while Soriel held the candle above his head saying: 'Look out for the last step.' "

An Odd Feast

IT WAS in the winter of—I do not remember what year, that I went to Normandy to visit my bachelor cousin, Jules de Banneville, who lived alone in the old manor, with a cook, a valet, and a keeper. I had the hunting fever and for a month did nothing else from morning until night.

The castle, an old, gray building surrounded with pines and avenues of tall oak-trees, looked as if it had been deserted for centuries. The antique furniture and the portraits of Jules's ancestors were the only inhabitants of the spacious rooms and halls now closed.

We had taken shelter in the only habitable room, an immense kitchen, which had been plastered all over to keep the rats out. The big, white walls were covered with whips, guns, horns, etc., and in the huge fireplace a brush-wood fire was burning, throwing strange lights around the corners of the dismal room. We would sit in front of the fire every night, our hounds stretched in every available space between our feet, dreaming and barking in their sleep, until, getting drowsy, we would climb to our rooms and slip into our beds shivering.

It had been freezing hard that day and we were sitting as usual in front of

the fire, watching a hare and two partridges being roasted for dinner, and the savory smell sharpened our appetites.

"It will be awfully cold going to bed to-night," said Jules.

"Yes, but there will be plenty of ducks to-morrow morning," I replied indifferently.

The servant had set our plates at one end of the table and those of the servants at the other.

"Gentlemen, do you know it is Christmas eve?" she asked.

We certainly did not; we never looked at the calendar.

"That accounts for the bells ringing all day," said Jules. "There is midnight service to-night."

"Yes, sir; but they also rang because old Fournel is dead."

Fournel was an old shepherd, well known in the country. He was ninety-six years old and had never known a day's sickness until a month ago, when he had taken cold by falling into a pool on a dark night and had died of the consequences.

"If you like," said Jules, "we will go and see these poor people after dinner."

The old man's family consisted of his grandson, fifty-eight years old and the latter's wife, one year younger. His

children had died years ago. They lived in a miserable hut at the entrance of the village.

Perhaps Christmas eve in a lonely castle was an incentive, at all events we were very talkative that night. Our dinner had lasted way into the night and long after the servant had left us, we sat there smoking pipe after pipe, narrating old experiences, telling of past revels and the surprises of the morrow which followed our adventures. Our solitude had brought us closer together and we exchanged those confidences which only intimate friends can.

"I am going to church, sir," said the servant, reappearing.

"What, so soon!" exclaimed Jules.

"It lacks only a quarter of twelve, sir."

"Let us go to church too," said Jules.

"The midnight service is very attractive in the country."

I assented and having wrapped ourselves up we started for the village. It was bitterly cold, but a clear, beautiful night. We could hear the peasants' wooden shoes on the crisp, frozen earth and the church bell ringing in the distance. The road was dotted here and there with dancing lights. It was the peasants carrying lanterns, lighting the way for their wives and children. As we approached the village, Jules said:

"Here is where the Fournels live, let us go in."

We knocked repeatedly, but in vain. A neighboring peasant informed us that they had gone to church to pray for their grandfather.

"We will see them on our way back," said Jules.

The service had begun when we en-

tered the church. It was profusely decorated with small candles, and to the left, in a small chapel, the birth of Christ was represented by wax figures, pine brush forming a background. The men stood with bowed heads, and the women, kneeling, clasped their hands in deep devotion. After a few minutes Jules said:

"It is stifling in here, let us go outside."

We left the shivering peasants to their devotions and regaining the deserted road, we resumed our conversation. We had talked so long that the service was over when we came back to the village. A small ray of light filtered through the Fournels' door.

"They are watching their dead," said Jules. "They will be pleased to see us."

We went in. The low, dark room was lighted only by a smoking candle, placed in the middle of the large, coarse table, under which a bread bin had been built, taking up the whole length of it. A suffocating odor of roasted blood pudding pervaded every corner of the room. Seated face to face, were Fournel and his wife, a gloomy and brutish expression on their faces. Between the two, a single plate of the pudding, the popular dish on Christmas eve, out of which they would take turns in cutting a piece off, spread it on their bread and munch in silence. When the man's glass was empty, the woman would fill it out of an earthen jar containing cider.

They asked us to be seated and to "join them," but at our refusal they continued to munch. After a few minutes' silence Jules said:

"Well, Anthime, so your grandfather is dead!"

"Yes, sir, he died this afternoon."

The woman snuffed the candle in silence and I, for the want of something to say, added:

"He was quite old, was he not?"

"Oh, his time was up," she answered; "he was no earthly use here."

An invincible desire to see the old man took possession of me and I asked to see him. The two peasants suddenly became agitated and exchanged questioning glances. Jules noticed this and insisted. Then the man with a sly, suspicious look, asked:

"What good would it do you?"

"No good," said Jules; "but why will you not let us see him?"

"I am willing," said the man, shrugging his shoulders, "but it is kind of unhandy just now."

We conjectured all sorts of things. Neither of them stirred. They sat there with eyes lowered, a sullen expression on their faces seeming to say: "Go away."

"Come Anthime, take us to his room," said Jules with authority.

"It's no use, my good sir, he isn't there any more," said the man resolutely.

"Where is he?" said Jules.

The woman interrupted, saying:

"You see, sir, we had no other place to put him so we put him in the bin

until morning." And having taken the top of the table off, she held the candle near the opening. We looked in and sure enough, there he was, a shriveled gray mass, his gray hair matted about his face, barefooted and rolled up in his shepherd's cloak, sleeping his last sleep among crusts of bread as ancient as himself.

His grandchildren had used as a table the bin which held his body!

Jules was indignant, and pale with anger, said:

"You villains! Why did you not leave him in his bed?"

The woman burst into tears and speaking rapidly:

"You see, my good gentlemen, it's just this way. We have but one bed, and being only three we slept together; but since he's been so sick we slept on the floor. The floor is awful hard and cold these days, my good gentlemen, so when he died this afternoon we said to ourselves: 'As long as he is dead he doesn't feel anything and what's the use of leaving him in bed? He'll be just as comfortable in the bin.' We can't sleep with a dead man, my good gentlemen!—now can we?"

Jules was exasperated and went out banging the door, and I after him, laughing myself sick.

Sympathy

HE WAS going up the Rue des Martyrs in a melancholy frame of mind, and in a melancholy frame of mind she also was going up the Rue des Martyrs. He was already old, nearly sixty, with a bald

head under his seedy tall hat, a gray beard, half buried in a high shirt collar, with dull eyes, an unpleasant mouth, and yellow teeth.

She was past forty, with thin hair over

her puffs, and with a false plait; her linen was doubtful in color, and she had evidently bought her unfashionable dress at a *hand-me-down* shop. He was thin, while she was chubby. He had been handsome, proud, ardent, full of self-confidence, certain of his future, and seeming to hold in his hands all the trumps with which to win the game on the green table of Parisian life, while she had been pretty, sought after, fast, and in a fair way to have horses and carriages, and to win the first prize on the turf of gallantry among the favorites of fortune.

At times, in his dark moments, he remembered the time when he had come to Paris from the country, with a volume of poetry and plays in his portmanteau, feeling a supreme contempt for all the writers who were then in vogue, and sure of supplanting them. She often, when she awoke in the morning to another day's unhappiness, remembered that happy time when she had been launched on to the world, when she already saw that she was more sought after than Marie G. or Sophie N. or any other woman of that class, who had been her companions in vice, and whose lovers she had stolen from them.

He had had a splendid start. Not, indeed, as a poet and dramatist, as he had hoped at first, but by a series of scandalous stories which had made a sensation on the boulevards, so that after an action for damages and several duels, he had become "our witty and brilliant colleague who, etc., etc."

She had had her moments of extraordinary good luck, though she certainly did not eclipse Marie P. or Camille L., whom men compared to Zenobia or

Ninon de l'Enclos. Still her fortune caused her to be talked about in the newspapers, and brought about a revolution at certain *tables d'hôte* in Montmartre. But one fine day, the newspaper in which our brilliant and witty colleague used to write became defunct, having been killed by a much more cynical rival, thanks to the venomous pen of a much more brilliant and witty colleague. Then the insults of the former having become pure and simple mud-pelting, his style soon became worn out, to the disgust of the public, and the celebrated "Mr. What's-his-name" had great difficulty in getting on to some minor paper, where he was transformed into the obscure penny-a-liner "Machin."

Now one evening the quasi-rival of Marie P. and Camille L. had fallen ill, and consequently into pecuniary difficulties, and the prostitute "No-matter-who" was now on the lookout for a dinner, and would have been only too happy to get it at some *table d'hôte* in Montmartre. Machin had had a return of ambition with regard to his poetry and his dramas, but then, his verses of former days had lost their freshness, and his youthful dramas appeared to him to be childish. He would have to write others, and, by Jove! he felt himself capable of doing it, for he had plenty of ideas and plans in his head, and he could easily demolish many successful writers if he chose to try! But then, the difficulty was, how to set about it, and to find the necessary leisure and time for thought. He had his daily bread to gain, and something besides; his coffee, his game of cards and other little requirements, and the incessant writing article upon article barely sufficed for

that, and so days and years went by, and Machin was Machin still.

She also longed for former years, and surely it could not be so very hard to find a lover to start her on her career once more, for many of her female friends, who were not nearly so nice as she, had unearthed one, so why should not she be equally fortunate? But there, her youth had gone and she had lost all her chances; other women had their fancy men, and she had to take men on every day at reduced prices, and so day after day and months and years passed, and the prostitute No-matter-who had remained the prostitute No-matter-who.

Often, in a fit of despondency, he used to say to himself, thinking of some one who had succeeded in life: "But, after all, I am cleverer than that fellow."

And she always said to herself, when she got up to her miserable, daily round, when she thought of such and such a woman, who was now settled in life: "In what respect is that slut better than I am?"

And Machin, who was nearly sixty, and whose head was bald under his shabby tall hat, and whose gray beard was half buried in a high shirt collar, who had dull eyes, an unpleasant mouth, and yellow teeth, was mad with his fellow-men, while the prostitute No-matter-who, with thin hair over her puffs, and with false plait, with linen of a doubtful color, and with her unfashionable dress, which she had evidently bought at a *hand-me-down* shop, was enraged with society.

Ah! Those miserable, dark hours, and the wretched awakenings! That evening he was more than usually wretched, as he

had just lost all his pay for the next month, that miserable stipend which he earned so hardly by almost editing the newspaper, for three hundred francs* a month, in a brothel.

And she, too, that evening, was in a state of semi-stupidity, as she had had too many glasses of beer, which a charitable female friend had given her. She was almost afraid to go back to her room, as her landlord had told her in the morning that unless she paid the fortnight's back rent that she owed at the rate of a franc a day, he would turn her out of doors and keep her things.

This was the reason why they were both going up the Rue des Martyrs in a melancholy frame of mind. There was scarcely a soul in the muddy streets; it was getting dark and beginning to rain, and the drains smelt horribly.

He passed her, and in a mechanical voice she said: "Will you not come home with me, you handsome, dark man?"

"I have no money," he replied.

But she ran after him, and catching hold of his arm, she said: "Only a franc; that is nothing."

And he turned round, looked at her, and seeing that she must have been pretty, and that she was still stout (and he was fond of fat women), he said: "Where do you live? Near here?"

"In the Rue Lepic."

"Why! So do I."

"Then that is all right, eh? Come along, old fellow."

He felt in his pockets and pulled out all the money he found there, which amounted to thirteen sous,† and said:

*\$60.

†Thirteen cents.

"That is all I have, upon my honor."

"All right," she said; "come along."

And they continued their melancholy walk along the Rue des Martyrs, side by side now, but without speaking, and

without guessing that their two existences harmonized and corresponded with each other, and that by huddling up together, they would be merely accomplishing the acme of their twin destinies.

A Traveler's Tale

I.

THE car was full as we left Cannes. We were conversing; everybody was acquainted. As we passed Tarascon some one remarked: "Here's the place where they assassinate people."

And we began to talk of the mysterious and untraceable murderer, who for the last two years had taken, from time to time, the life of a traveler. Everyone made his guess, everyone gave his opinion; the women shudderingly gazed at the dark night through the car windows, fearing suddenly to see a man's head at the door. We all began telling frightful stories of terrible encounters, meetings with madmen in a flying-express, of hours passed opposite a suspected individual.

Each man knew an anecdote to his credit, each one had intimidated, overpowered, and throttled some evildoer in most surprising circumstances, with an admirable presence of mind and audacity.

A physician, who spent every winter in the south, desired, in his turn, to tell an adventure:

"I," said he, "never have had the luck to test my courage in an affair of this kind; but I knew a woman, now dead,

one of my patients, to whom the most singular thing in the world happened, and also the most mysterious and pathetic.

"She was Russian, the Countess Marie Baranow, a very great lady, of an exquisite beauty. You know how beautiful the Russian women are, or at least how beautiful they seem to us, with their fine noses, their delicate mouths, their eyes of an indescribable color, a blue gray, and their cold grace, a little hard! They have something about them, mischievous and seductive, haughty and sweet, tender and severe, altogether charming to a Frenchman. At the bottom, it is, perhaps, the difference of race and of type which makes me see so much in them.

"Her physician had seen for many years that she was threatened with a disease of the lungs, and had tried to persuade her to come to the south of France; but she obstinately refused to leave St. Petersburg. Finally, the last autumn, deeming her lost, the doctor warned her husband, who directed his wife to start at once for Mentone.

"She took the train, alone in her car, her servants occupying another compartment. She sat by the door, a little sad, seeing the fields and villages pass, feel-

ing very lonely, very desolate in life, without children, almost without relatives, with a husband whose love was dead and who cast her thus to the end of the world without coming with her, as they send a sick valet to the hospital.

"At each station her servant Ivan came to see if his mistress wanted anything. He was an old domestic, blindly devoted, ready to accomplish all the orders which she should give him.

"Night fell, and the train rolled along at full speed. She could not sleep, being wearied and nervous.

"Suddenly the thought struck her to count the money which her husband had given her at the last minute, in French gold. She opened her little bag and emptied the shining flood of metal on her lap.

"But all at once a breath of cold air struck her face. Surprised, she raised her head. The door had just opened. The Countess Marie, bewildered, hastily threw a shawl over the money spread upon her lap, and waited. Some seconds passed, then a man in evening dress appeared, bareheaded, wounded on the hand, and panting. He closed the door, sat down, looked at his neighbor with gleaming eyes, and then wrapped a handkerchief around his wrist, which was bleeding.

"The young woman felt herself fainting with fear. This man, surely, had seen her counting her money and had come to rob and kill her.

"He kept gazing at her, breathless, his features convulsed, doubtless ready to spring upon her.

"He suddenly said:

"'Madame, don't be afraid!'

"She made no response, being incapa-

ble of opening her mouth, hearing her heart-beats, and a buzzing in her ears.

"He continued:

"'I am not a malefactor, Madame.

"She continued to be silent, but by a sudden movement which she made, her knees meeting, the gold coins began to run to the floor as water runs from a spout.

"The man, surprised, looked at this stream of metal, and he suddenly stooped to pick it up.

"She, terrified, rose, casting her whole fortune on the carpet and ran to the door to leap out upon the track.

"But he understood what she was going to do, and springing forward, seized her in his arms, seated her by force, and held her by the wrists.

"'Listen to me, Madame,' said he, 'I am not a malefactor; the proof of it is that I am going to gather up this gold and return it to you. But I am a lost man, a dead man, if you do not assist me to pass the frontier. I cannot tell you more. In an hour we shall be at the last Russian station; in an hour and twenty minutes we shall cross the boundary of the Empire. If you do not help me I am lost. And yet I have neither killed anyone, nor robbed, nor done anything contrary to honor. This I swear to you. I cannot tell you more.'

"And kneeling down he picked up the gold, even hunting under the seats for the last coins, which had rolled to a distance. Then, when the little leather bag was full again he gave it to his neighbor without saying a word, and returned to seat himself at the other corner of the compartment. Neither of them moved. She kept motionless and mute, still faint from terror, but recov-

ering little by little. As for him, he did not make a gesture or a motion, remained sitting erect, his eyes staring in front of him, very pale, as if he were dead. From time to time she threw a quick look at him, and as quickly turned her glance away. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, and was very handsome, with the mien of a gentleman.

"The train ran through the darkness, giving at intervals its shrill signals, now slowing up in its progress, and again starting off at full speed. But presently its progress slackened, and after several sharp whistles it came to a full stop.

"Ivan appeared at the door for his orders.

"The Countess Marie, her voice trembling, gave one last look at her companion; then she said to her servant, in a quick tone:

"'Ivan, you will return to the Count; I do not need you any longer.'

"The man, bewildered, opened his enormous eyes. He stammered:

"'But, my lady—'

"She replied:

"'No, you will not come with me, I have changed my mind. I wish you to stay in Russia. Here is some money for your return home. Give me your cap and cloak.'

"The old servant, frightened, took off his cap and cloak, obeying without question, accustomed to the sudden whims and caprices of his masters. And he went away, with tears in his eyes.

"The train started again, rushing toward the frontier.

"Then the Countess Marie said to her neighbor:

"'These things are for you, Monsieur, —you are Ivan, my servant. I make

only one condition to what I am doing: that is, that you shall not speak a word to me, neither to thank me, nor for anything whatsoever.'

"The unknown bowed without uttering a syllable.

"Soon the train stopped again, and officers in uniform visited the train.

"The Countess handed them her papers, and pointing to the man seated at the end of the compartment said:

"'That is my servant Ivan, whose passport is here.'

"The train again started.

"During the night they sat opposite each other, both mute.

"When morning came, as they stopped at a German station, the unknown got out; then, standing at the door, he said:

"'Pardon me, Madame, for breaking my promise, but as I have deprived you of a servant, it is proper that I should replace him. Have you need of anything?'

"She replied coldly:

"'Go and find my maid.'

"He went to summon her. Then he disappeared.

"When she alighted at some station for luncheon she saw him at a distance looking at her. They finally arrived at Mentone."

II.

The doctor was silent for a second, and then resumed:

"One day, while I was receiving patients in my office, a tall young man entered. He said to me:

"'Doctor, I have come to ask you news of the Countess Marie Baranow. I am a friend of her husband, although she does not know me.'

"I answered:

" 'She is lost. She will never return to Russia.'

"And suddenly this man began to sob, then he rose and went out, staggering like a drunken man.

"I told the Countess that evening that a stranger had come to make inquiries about her health. She seemed moved, and told me the story which I have just related to you. She added:

" 'That man, whom I do not know at all, follows me now like my shadow. I meet him every time I go out. He looks at me in a strange way, but he has never spoken to me!'

"She pondered a moment, then added:

" 'Come, I'll wager that he is under the window now.'

"She left her reclining-chair, went to the window and drew back the curtain, and actually showed me the man who had come to see me, seated on a bench at the edge of the side wall with his eyes raised toward the house. He perceived us, rose, and went away without once turning around.

"Then I understood a sad and surprising thing, the mute love of these two beings, who were not acquainted with each other.

"He loved her with the devotion of a rescued animal, grateful and devoted to the death. He came every day to ask me, 'How is she?' understanding that I had guessed his feelings. And he wept frightfully when he saw her pass, weaker and paler every day.

"She said to me:

" 'I have never spoken but once to that singular man, and yet it seems as if I had known him for twenty years.'

"And when they met she returned his bow with a serious and charming smile.

I felt that—although she was given up, and knew herself lost—she was happy to be loved thus, with this respect and constancy, with this exaggerated poetry, with this devotion, ready for anything.

"Nevertheless, faithful to her super-excited obstinacy, she absolutely refused to learn his name, to speak to him. She said:

" 'No, no, that would spoil this strange friendship. We must remain strangers to each other.'

"As for him, he was certainly a kind of Don Quixote, for he did nothing to bring himself closer to her. He intended to keep to the end the absurd promise never to speak to her which he had made in the car.

"Often, during her long hours of weakness, she rose from her reclining-chair and partly opened the curtain to see whether he were there, beneath the window. And when she had seen him, ever motionless upon his bench, she came back to lie down again with a smile upon her lips.

"She died one morning about ten o'clock.

"As I left the house he came to me, his countenance showing that he had already learned the news.

" 'I would like to see her, for a second, in your presence,' said he.

"I took him by the arm and we entered the house together.

"When he was beside the bed of the dead woman, he seized her hand and gave it a long and passionate kiss; then he went away like a man bereft of his senses."

The doctor again was silent. Then he resumed:

"There you have, certainly, the most singular railroad adventure that I know. It must also be said that men are queer lunatics."

A woman murmured in a low tone:

"Those two people were less crazy

than you think. They were—they were—"

But she could speak no longer because she was weeping. As the conversation was changed to calm her, no one ever knew what she had intended to say.

Little Louise Roque

MEDERIC ROMPEL, the postman, familiarly called by the country people "Mederi," started at his usual hour from the posthouse at Rouy-le-Tors. Having passed through the little town, striding like an old trooper, he cut across the meadows of Villaumes in order to reach the bank of the Brindelle, which led him along the water's edge to the village of Carvelin, where his distribution commenced. He traveled quickly, following the course of the narrow river, which frothed, murmured, and boiled along its bed of grass under the arching willow-trees. The big stones, impeding the flow of water, created around them a sort of aqueous necktie ending in a knot of foam. In some places, there were cascades a foot wide, often invisible, which made under the leaves, under the tendrils, under a roof of verdure, a noise at once angry and gentle. Further on, the banks widened out, and you saw a small, placid lake where trout were swimming in the midst of all that green vegetation which keeps undulating in the depths of tranquil streams.

Mederic went on without a halt, seeing nothing and with only one thought in his mind: "My first letter is for the Poivron family; then I have one for M.

Renardet; so I must cross the wood."

His blue blouse, fastened round his waist by a black leathern belt, moved in quick, regular fashion above the green hedge of willow-trees; and his stick of stout holly kept time with the steady march of his feet.

He crossed the Brindelle over a bridge formed of a single tree thrown lengthwise, with a rope attached to two stakes driven into the river banks as its only balustrade.

The wood, which belonged to M. Renardet, the mayor of Carvelin, and the largest landowner in the district, consisted of a number of huge old trees, straight as pillars, and extended for about half a league along the left bank of the stream which served as a boundary for this immense arch of foliage. Alongside the water there were large shrubs warmed by the sun: but under the trees you found nothing but moss, thick, soft, plastic moss, which exhaled into the stagnant air a light odor of loam and withered branches.

Mederic slackened his pace, took off his black cap trimmed with red lace, and wiped his forehead, for it was by this time hot in the meadows, though not yet eight o'clock in the morning.

He had just recovered from the effects of the heat, and had accelerated his pace when he noticed at the foot of a tree a knife, a child's small knife. As he picked it up, he discovered a thimble, and then a needlecase, not far away.

Having found these objects, he thought: "I'll intrust them to the mayor," and resumed this journey. But now he kept his eyes open, expecting to find something else.

All of a sudden, he drew up stiffly as if he had run up against a wooden bar. Ten paces in front of him on the moss, lay stretched on her back a little girl, quite naked. She was about twelve years old. Her arms were hanging down, her legs parted, and her face covered with a handkerchief. There were little spots of blood on her thighs.

Mederic now advanced on tiptoe, as if afraid to make a noise; he apprehended some danger, and glanced toward the spot uneasily.

What was this? No doubt, she was asleep. Then, he reflected that a person does not go to sleep thus, naked, at half past seven in the morning under cool trees. Then she must be dead; and he must be face to face with a crime. At this thought, a cold shiver ran through his frame, although he was an old soldier. And then a murder was such a rare thing in the country—and above all the murder of a child—that he could not believe his eyes. But she had no wound—nothing save these blood drops on her legs. How, then, had she been killed?

He stopped when quite near her and stared at her, while leaning on his stick. Certainly, he knew her, as he knew all the inhabitants of the district; but, not

being able to get a look at her face, he could not guess her name. He stooped forward in order to take off the handkerchief which covered her face; then paused with outstretched hand, restrained by an idea that occurred to him.

Had he the right to disarrange anything in the condition of the corpse before the magisterial investigation? He pictured justice to himself as a general whom nothing escapes, who attaches as much importance to a lost button as to a stag of a knife in the stomach. Perhaps under this handkerchief evidence to support a capital charge could be found; in fact if there were sufficient proof there to secure a conviction, it might lose its value if touched by an awkward hand.

Then he straightened up with the intention of hastening toward the mayor's residence, but again another thought held him back. If the little girl was still alive, by any chance—he could not leave her lying there in this way. He sank on his kness very gently, a yard away from her, through precaution, and stretched his hand toward her feet. The flesh was icy cold, with that terrible coldness which makes dead flesh frightful, and leaves us no longer in doubt. The letter-carrier, as he touched her, felt his heart leap to his mouth, as he said himself afterward, and his lips were parched with dry saliva. Rising up abruptly he rushed off through the trees to M. Renardet's house.

He hurried on in double-quick time, with his stick under his arm, his hands clenched, and his head thrust forward, and his leathern bag, filled with letters

and newspapers, flapping regularly at his side.

The mayor's residence was at the end of the wood, which he used as a park, and one side of it was washed by a little lagoon formed at this spot by the Brindelle.

It was a big, square house of gray stone, very old. It had stood many a siege in former days, and at the end of it was a huge tower, twenty meters high, built in the water. From the top of this fortress the entire country around could be seen in olden times. It was called the Fox's Tower, without anyone knowing exactly why; and from the appellation, no doubt, had come the name Renardet, borne by the owners of this fief, which had remained in the same family, it was said, for more than two hundred years. For the Renardets formed part of that upper middle class which is all but noble and was met with so often in the provinces before the Revolution.

The postman dashed into the kitchen where the servants were taking breakfast, and exclaimed:

"Is the mayor up? I want to speak to him at once."

Mederic was recognized as a man of weight and authority, and it was soon understood that something serious had happened.

As soon as word was brought to M. Renardet, he ordered the postman to be sent up to him. Pale and out of breath, with his cap in his hand, Mederic found the mayor seated in front of a long table covered with scattered papers.

He was a big, tall man, heavy and red-faced, strong as an ox, and greatly liked in the district, though of an ex-

cessively violent disposition. Very nearly forty years old, and a widower for the past six months, he lived on his estate like a country gentleman. His choleric temperament had often brought him into trouble, from which the magistrates of Rouy-le-Tors, like indulgent and prudent friends, had extricated him. Had he not one day thrown the conductor of the diligence from the top of his seat because the letter had nearly crushed his retriever, Micmac? Had he not broken the ribs of a gamekeeper, who had abused him for having passed through a neighbor's property with a gun in his hand? Had he not even caught by the collar the sub-prefect, who stopped in the village in the course of an administrative round described by M. Renardet as an electioneering tour; for he was against the government, according to his family tradition?

The mayor asked:

"What's the matter now, Mederic?"

"I have found a little girl dead in your wood."

Renardet rose up, with his face the color of brick.

"A little girl, do you say?"

"Yes, M'sieu', à little girl, quite naked, on her back, with blood on her, dead—quite dead!"

The mayor gave vent to an oath:

"By God, I'd make a bet 'tis little Louise Roque! I have just learned that she did not go home to her mother last night. Where did you find her?"

The postman pointed out where the place was, gave full details, and offered to conduct the mayor to the spot.

But Renardet became brusque:

"No, I don't need you. Send the

steward, the mayor's secretary, and the doctor immediately to me, and resume your rounds. Quick, go quick, and tell them to meet me in the wood."

The letter-carrier, a man used to discipline, obeyed and withdrew, angry and grieved at not being able to be present at the investigation.

The mayor, in his turn, prepared to go out. He took his hat, a big soft hat, and paused for a few seconds on the threshold of his abode. In front of him stretched a wide lawn in which three large patches were conspicuous—three large beds of flowers in full bloom, one facing the house and the others at either side of it. Further on, rose skyward the principal trees in the wood, while at the left, above the spot where the Brindelle widened into a pool, could be seen long meadows, an entirely flat green sweep of country, cut by dykes and monster-like willows, twisted dwarf-trees, always cut short, having on their thick squat trunks a quivering tuft of branches.

To the right, behind the stables, the outhouses, and the buildings connected with the property, might be seen the village, which was prosperous, being mainly inhabited by raisers of oxen.

Renardet slowly descended the steps in front of his house, and, turning to the left, gained the water's edge, which he followed at a slow pace, his hands behind his back. He went on, with bent head, and from time to time he glanced round in search of the persons for whom he had sent.

When he stood beneath the trees, he stopped, took off his hat, and wiped his forehead as Mederic had done; for the burning sun was shedding its fiery rain

upon the ground. Then the mayor resumed his journey, stopped once more, and retraced his steps. Suddenly stooping down, he stepped his handkerchief in the stream that glided at his feet and stretched it round his head, under his hat. Drops of water flowed along his temples, over his purple ears, over his strong red neck, and trickled one after the other, under his white shirt-collar.

As yet nobody had appeared; he began tapping with his foot, then he called out: "Hallo! Hallo!"

A voice at his right answered: "Hallo! Hallo!" and the doctor appeared under the trees. He was a thin little man, an ex-military surgeon, who passed in the neighborhood for a very skillful practitioner. He limped, having been wounded while in the service, and had to use a stick to assist him in walking.

Next came the steward and the mayor's secretary, who, having been sent for at the same time, arrived together. They seemed scared, as they hurried forward, out of breath, walking and trotting in turn in order to hasten, and moving their arms up and down so vigorously that they seemed to do more work with them than with their legs.

Renardet said to the doctor:

"You know what the trouble is about?"

"Yes, a child found dead in the wood by Mederic."

"That's quite correct. Come on."

They walked on side by side, followed by the two men.

Their steps made no noise on the moss, their eyes were gazing downward right in front of them.

The doctor hastened his steps, in-

terested by the discovery. As soon as they were near the corpse, he bent down to examine it without touching it. He had put on a pair of glasses, as you do when you are looking at some curious object; then he turned round very quietly and said, without rising up:

"Violated and assassinated, as we shall prove presently. The little girl, moreover, is almost a woman—look at her throat."

Her two breasts, already nearly full-developed, fell over her chest, relaxed by death. The doctor lightly drew away the handkerchief which covered her face. It was almost black, frightful to look at, the tongue protruding, the eyes bloodshot. He went on:

"Faith, she was strangled the moment the deed was done."

He felt her neck:

"Strangled with the hands without leaving any special trace, neither the mark of the nails nor the imprint of the fingers. Quite right. It is little Louise Roque, sure enough!"

He delicately replaced the handkerchief:

"There's nothing for me to do. She's been dead for the last hour at least. We must give notice of the matter to the authorities."

Renardet, standing up, with his hands behind his back, kept staring with a stony look at the little body exposed to view on the grass. He murmured:

"What a wretch! We must find the clothes."

The doctor felt the hands, the arms, the legs. He said:

"She must have been bathing, no doubt. They ought to be at the water's edge."

The mayor thereupon gave directions:

"Do you, Princèpe [this was his secretary], go and look for those clothes for me along the river. Do you, Maxime [this was the steward], hurry on towards Rouy-le-Tors, and bring on here to me the examining magistrate with the gendarmes. They must be here within an hour. You understand."

The two men quickly departed, and Renardet said to the doctor:

"What miscreant has been able to do such a deed in this part of the country?"

The doctor murmured:

"Who knows? Everyone is capable of that! Everyone in particular and nobody in general. However, it must be some prowler, some workman out of employment. As we live under a Republic, we must expect to meet this sort of miscreant along the roads."

Both of them were Bonapartists. The mayor went on:

"Yes, it could only be a stranger, a passer-by, a vagabond without heart or home."

The doctor added with the shadow of a smile on his face:

"And without a wife. Having neither a good supper nor a good bed, he procured the rest for himself. You can't tell how many men there may be in the world capable of a crime at a given moment. Did you know that this little girl had disappeared?"

And with the end of his stick he touched one after the other the stiffened fingers of the corpse, resting on them as on the keys of a piano.

"Yes, the mother came last night to look for me about nine o'clock, the child not having come home for supper up to

seven. We went to try and find her along the roads up to midnight, but we did not think of the wood. However, we needed daylight to carry out a search with a practical result."

"Will you have a cigar?" said the doctor.

"Thanks, I don't care to smoke. It gives me a turn to look at this."

They remained standing in front of the young girl's body, pale and still, on the dark background of moss. A big fly was walking along one of the thighs, it stopped at the blood-stains, went on again, always rising higher, ran along the side with his lively, jerky movements, climbed up one of the breasts, then came back again to explore the other. The two men silently watched this wandering black speck. The doctor said:

"How tantalizing it is, a fly on the skin! The ladies of the last century had good reason to paste them on their faces. Why has the fashion gone out?"

But the mayor seemed not to hear, plunged as he was in deep thought.

All of a sudden he turned around, surprised by a shrill noise. A woman in a cap and a blue apron rushed up through the trees. It was the mother, La Roque. As soon as she saw Renardet she began to shriek:

"My little girl, where's my little girl?" in such a distracted manner that she did not glance down at the ground. Suddenly, she saw the corpse, stopped short, clasped her hands, and raised both her arms while she uttered a sharp, heartrending cry—the cry of a mutilated animal. Then, she rushed toward the body, fell on her knees, and snatched the handkerchief that covered the face.

When she saw that frightful countenance, black and convulsed, she recoiled with a shudder, then pressed her face against the ground, giving vent to terrible and continuous choking screams, her mouth close to the thick moss.

Her tall, thin frame, to which her clothes clung tightly, was palpitating, shaken with convulsions. They could see her bony ankles and withered limbs covered with thick blue stockings, shivering horribly. Unconsciously she dug at the soil with her crooked fingers as if to make a grave in which to hide herself.

The doctor pityingly said in a low tone:

"Poor old woman!"

Renardet felt a strange rumbling in his stomach; then he gave vent to a sort of loud sneeze that issued at the same time through nose and mouth; and, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, began to weep copiously, coughing, sobbing noisily, wiping his face, and stammering:

"Damn — damn — damned pig to do this! I would like to see him guillotined!"

But Princèpe reappeared, with his hands empty. He murmured:

"I have found nothing, M'sieu', le Maire, nothing at all anywhere."

The mayor, scared, replied in a thick voice, drowned in tears:

"What is it you could not find?"

"The little girl's clothes."

"Well — well — look again, and find them—or you'll have to answer to me."

The man, knowing that the mayor would not brook opposition, set forth again with hesitating steps, casting on the corpse horrified and timid glances.

Distant voices arose under the trees, a confused sound, the noise of an approaching crowd; for Mederic had, in the course of his rounds, carried the news from door to door. The people of the neighborhood, stupefied at first, had gone gossiping from their own fire-sides into the street, and from one threshold to another. Then they gathered together. They talked over, discussed, and commented on the event for some minutes, and they had now come to see it for themselves.

They arrived in groups, a little faltering and uneasy through fear of the first impression of such a scene on their minds. When they saw the body they stopped, not daring to advance, and speaking low. Then they grew bold, went on a few steps, stopped again, advanced once more, and soon formed around the dead girl, her mother, the doctor, and Renardet, a thick circle, agitated and noisy, which swayed forward under the sudden pushes of the last comers. And now they touched the corpse. Some of them even bent down to feel it with their fingers. The doctor kept them back. But the mayor, waking abruptly out of his torpor, broke into a rage, and, seizing Dr. Labarbe's stick, flung himself on his townspeople, stammering:

"Clear out—clear out—you pack of brutes—clear out!"

And in a second the crowd of sight-seers had fallen back two hundred metres.

La Roque was lifted up, turned round, and placed in a sitting posture; she remained weeping with her hands clasped over her face.

The occurrence was discussed among

the crowd; and young lads, with eager eyes, curiously scrutinized the nude body of the girl. Renardet perceived this, and, abruptly taking off his vest, flung it over the little girl, who was entirely lost to view under the wide garment.

The spectators drew quietly nearer. The wood was filled with people, and a continuous hum of voices rose up under the tangled foliage of the tall trees.

The mayor, in his shirt-sleeves, remained standing, with his stick in his hands, in a fighting attitude. He seemed exasperated by this curiosity on the part of the people, and kept repeating:

"If one of you comes nearer, I'll break his head just as I would a dog's."

The peasants were greatly afraid of him. They held back. Dr. Labarbe, who was smoking, sat down beside La Roque, and spoke to her in order to distract her attention. The old woman soon removed her hands from her face, and replied with a flood of tearful words, pouring forth her grief in rapid sentences. She told the whole story of her life, her marriage, the death of her man—a bull-sticker, who had been gored to death—the infancy of her daughter, her wretched existence as a widow without resources and with a child to support. She had only this one, her little Louise, and the child had been killed—killed in this wood. All of a sudden, she felt anxious to see it again, and dragging herself on her knees toward the corpse, she raised up one corner of the garment that covered it; then she let it fall again, and began wailing once more. The crowd remained silent, eagerly watching the mother's gestures.

But all of a sudden there was a sway-

ing of the crowd, and a cry of "The gendarmes! The gendarmes!"

Two gendarmes appeared in the distance, coming on at a rapid trot, escorting their captain and a little gentleman with red whiskers, who was bobbing up and down like a monkey on a big white mare.

The steward had found M. Putoin, the examining magistrate, just at the moment when he was mounting to take his daily ride, for he posed as a good horseman, to the great amusement of the officers.

He dismounted along with the captain, and pressed the hands of the mayor and the doctor, casting a ferret-like glance on the linen vest which swelled above the body lying underneath.

When he was thoroughly acquainted with the facts, he first gave orders to get rid of the public, whom the gendarmes drove out of the wood, but who soon reappeared in the meadow, and formed a line, a long line of excited and moving heads all along the Brindelle, on the other side of the stream.

The doctor in his turn gave explanations of which Renardet took a note in his memorandum book. All the evidence was given, taken down, and commented on without leading to any discovery. Maxime, too, came back without having found any trace of the clothes.

This surprised everybody; no one could explain it on the theory of theft, since these rags were not worth twenty sous; so this theory was inadmissible.

The examining magistrate, the mayor, the captain, and the doctor set to work by searching in pairs, putting aside the smallest branches along the water.

Renardet said to the judge:

"How does it happen that this wretch should conceal or carry away the clothes, and should then leave the body exposed in the open air and visible to everyone?"

The other, sly and knowing, answered:

"Perhaps a dodge. This crime has been committed either by a brute or by a crafty blackguard. In any case, we'll easily succeed in finding him."

The rolling of a vehicle made them turn their heads. It was the deputy magistrate, another doctor, and the registrar of the court who had arrived in their turn. They resumed their searches, all chatting in an animated fashion.

Renardet said suddenly:

"Do you know that I am expecting you to lunch with me?"

Everyone smilingly accepted the invitation, and the examining magistrate, finding that the case of little Louise Roque was quite enough to bother about for one day, turned toward the mayor:

"I can have the body brought to your house, can I not? You have a room in which you can keep it for me till this evening."

The other got confused, and stammered:

"Yes—no—no. To tell the truth, I prefer that it should not come into my house on account of—on account of my servants who are already talking about ghosts in—in my tower, in the Fox's Tower. You know—I could no longer keep a single one. No—I prefer not to have it in my house."

The magistrate began to smile:

"Good! I am going to get it carried off at once to Rouy, for the legal examination."

Turning toward the doctor:

"I can make use of your trap, can I not?"

"Yes, certainly."

Everybody came back to the place where the corpse lay. La Roque, now seated beside her daughter, had caught hold of her hand, and was staring right before her, with a wandering listless eye.

The two doctors endeavored to lead her away, so that she might not witness the dead girl's removal; but she understood at once what they wanted to do, and, flinging herself on the body, she seized it in both arms. Lying on top of the corpse, she exclaimed:

"You shall not have it—'tis mine—'tis mine now. They have killed her for me, and I want to keep her—you shall not have her——!"

All the men, affected and not knowing how to act, remained standing around her. Renardet fell on his knees, and said to her:

"Listen, La Roque, it is necessary—in order to find out who killed her. Without this it could not be found out. We must make a search for him in order to punish him. When we have found him, we'll give her up to you. I promise you this."

This explanation shook the woman's mind, and a feeling of hatred manifested in her distracted glance.

"So then they'll take him?"

"Yes, I promise you that."

"She rose up, deciding to let them do as they liked; but when the captain remarked: "'Tis surprising that her clothes cannot be found," a new idea, which she had not previously thought of, abruptly found an entrance into her brain, and she asked:

"Where are her clothes? They're mine. I want him. Where have they been put?"

They explained to her that they had not been found, then she called out for them with desperate obstinacy and with repeated moans:

"They're mine—I want them. Where are they? I want them!"

The more they tried to calm her, the more she sobbed, and persisted in her demands. She no longer wanted the body, she insisted on having the clothes, as much perhaps through the unconscious cupidity of a wretched being to whom a piece of silver represents a fortune, as through maternal tenderness.

And when the little body, rolled up in blankets which had been brought out from Renardet's house, had disappeared in the vehicle, the old woman, standing under the trees, held up by the mayor and the captain, exclaimed:

"I have nothing, nothing, nothing in the world, not even her little cap—her little cap."

The curé had just arrived, a young priest already growing stout. He took it on himself to carry off La Roque, and they went away together toward the village. The mother's grief was modified under the sugary words of the clergyman, who promised her a thousand compensations. But she incessantly kept repeating: "If I had only her little cap."

This idea now dominated every other.

Before they were out of hearing Renardet exclaimed:

"You will lunch with us, Monsieur l'Abbé—in an hour's time?"

The priest turned his head round, and replied:

"With pleasure, Monsieur le Maire. I'll be with you at twelve."

And they all directed their steps toward the house, whose gray front and large tower, built on the edge of the Brindelle, could be seen through the branches.

The meal lasted a long time. They talked about the crime and everybody was of the same opinion. It had been committed by some tramp passing there by chance while the little girl was bathing.

Then the magistrates returned to Rouy, announcing that they would return next day at an early hour. The doctor and the curé went to their respective homes, while Renardet, after a long walk through the meadows, returned to the wood, where he remained walking till nightfall with slow steps, his hands behind his back.

He went to bed early, and was still asleep next morning when the examining magistrate entered his room. He rubbed his hands together with a self-satisfied air. He said:

"Ha! ha! Still sleeping? Well, my dear fellow, we have news this morning."

The mayor sat up on his bed.

"What pray?"

"Oh! Something strange. You remember well how the mother yesterday clamored for some memento of her daughter, especially her little cap? Well, on opening her door this morning, she found on the threshold her child's two little wooden shoes. This proves that the crime was perpetrated by some one from the district, some one who felt pity for her. Besides, the postman Mederic found and brought me the thimble, the scissors, and the needlecase of the dead

girl. So then the man in carrying off the clothes in order to hide them, must have let fall the articles which were in the pocket. As for me, I attach special importance to the wooden shoes, as they indicate a certain moral culture and a faculty for tenderness on the part of the assassin. We will therefore, if you have no objection, pass in review together the principal inhabitants of your district."

The mayor got up. He rang for hot water to shave with, and said:

"With pleasure, but it will take rather a long time, so let us begin at once."

M. Putoin sat astride on a chair, thus pursuing even in a room, his mania for horsemanship. Renardet now covered his chin with a white lather while he looked at himself in the glass; then he sharpened his razor on the strop and went on:

"The principal inhabitant of Carvelin bears the name of Joseph Renardet, mayor, a rich landowner, a rough man who beats guards and coachmen—"

The examining magistrate burst out laughing:

"That's enough; let us pass on to the next."

"The second in importance is ill. Pelledent, his deputy, a rearer of oxen, an equally rich landowner, a crafty peasant, very sly, very close-fisted on every question of money, but incapable in my opinion of having perpetrated such a crime."

M. Putoin said:

"Let us pass on."

Then, while continuing to shave and wash himself, Renardet went on with the moral inspection of all the inhabitants of Carvelin. After two hours'

discussion, their suspicions were fixed on three individuals who had hitherto borne a shady reputation—a poacher named Cavalle, a fisher for club and cray-fish named Paquet, and a bull-sticker named Clovis.

II

The search for the perpetrator of the crime lasted all the summer, but he was not discovered. Those who were suspected and those who were arrested easily proved their innocence, and the authorities were compelled to abandon the attempt to capture the criminal.

But the murder seemed to have moved the entire country in a singular fashion. It left a disquietude, a vague fear, a sensation of mysterious terror, springing not merely from the impossibility of discovering any trace of the assassin, but above all from that strange finding of the wooden shoes in front of La Roque's door on the day after the crime. The certainty that the murderer had assisted at the investigation and that he was doubtless still living in the village, left a gloomy impression on every mind, and hung over the neighborhood like a constant menace.

The wood, besides, had become a dreaded spot, a place to be avoided, and supposed to be haunted.

Formerly, the inhabitants used to come and lounge there every Sunday afternoon. They used to sit down on the moss at the foot of the huge trees, or walk along the water's edge watching the trout gliding under the green undergrowth. The boys used to play bowls, hide-and-seek, and other games in certain places where they had upturned, smoothed out, and leveled the soil, and the girls, in rows of four or

five, used to trip along holding one another by the arms, and screaming out with their shrill voices ballads which grated on the ear, disturbed the tranquil air with discord and set the teeth on edge like vinegar. Now nobody ventured into and under the towering trees, as if afraid of finding there some corpse lying on the ground.

Autumn arrived; the leaves began to fall. They fell day and night from the tall trees, whirling round and round to the ground; and the sky could be seen through the bare branches. Sometimes when a gust of wind swept over the tree-tops, the slow, continuous rain suddenly grew heavier, and became a hoarsely growling storm, which drenched the moss with thick yellow water that made the ground swampy and yielding. And the almost imperceptible murmur, the floating, ceaseless whisper, gentle and sad, of this rainfall seemed like a low wail, and the continually falling leaves, like tears, big tears shed by the tall mournful trees, which were weeping, as it were, day and night over the close of the year, over the ending of warm dawns and soft twilights, over the ending of hot breezes and bright suns, and also perhaps over the crime which they had seen committed under the shade of their branches, over the girl violated and killed at their feet. They wept in the silence of the desolate empty wood, the abandoned, dreaded wood, where the soul, the childish soul of the dead little girl must have been wandering all alone.

The Brindelle, swollen by the storms, rushed on more quickly, yellow and angry, between its dry banks, lined with thin, bare willow-hedges.

Renardet suddenly resumed his walks

under the trees. Every day, at sunset, he came out of his house, descended the front steps slowly, and entered the wood, in a dreamy fashion with his hands in his pockets. For a long time he would pace over the damp, soft moss, while a legion of rooks, rushing to the spot from all the neighboring haunts in order to rest in the tall summits, spread themselves through space, like an immense mourning veil floating in the wind, uttering violent and sinister screams. Sometimes they would perch on the tangled branches dotting with black spots the red sky, the sky crimsoned with autumn twilight. Then, all of a sudden, they would set off again, croaking frightfully and trailing once more above the wood the long darkness of their flight. Then they would swoop down, at last, on the highest tree-tops, and gradually their cawings would die away, while advancing night merged their black plumes into the blackness of space.

Renardet was still strolling slowly under the trees; then, when the darkness prevented him from walking any longer, he went back to the house, sank all of a heap into his armchair in front of the glowing hearth and dried his feet at the fire.

Now, one morning, an important bit of news was circulated around the district: the mayor was getting his wood cut down.

Twenty woodcutters were already at work. They had commenced at the corner nearest to the house, and they worked rapidly in the master's presence.

At first the loppers climbed up the trunk. Tied to it by a rope collar, they clung round it in the beginning with

both arms, then, lifting one leg, struck the tree hard with the edge of a steel instrument attached to each foot. The edge penetrated the wood and remained stuck in it; and the man rose up as if on a step in order to strike with the steel attached to the other foot, and then once more supported himself till he could lift his first foot again.

With every upward movement was slipped higher the rope collar which fastened him to the tree. Over his loins hung and glittered the steel hatchet. He kept continually climbing in easy fashion like some parasite attacking a giant, mounting slowly up the immense trunk, embracing it and spurring it in order to decapitate it.

As soon as he reached the lowest branches, he stopped, detached from his side the sharp ax, and struck. Slowly, methodically, he chopped at the limb close to the trunk. Suddenly the branch cracked, gave way, bent, tore itself off, and fell, grazing the neighboring trees in its fall. Then it crashed down on the ground with a great sound of broken wood, and its slighter branches quivered for a long time.

The soil was covered with fragments which other men cut in their turn, bound in bundles, and plied in heaps, while the trees which were still left standing looked like enormous posts, gigantic forms amputated and shorn by the keen steel axes of the cutters.

When the lopper had finished his task, he left at the top of the straight slender shaft of the tree the rope collar which he had brought up with him, descending again with spur-like prods along the discrowned trunk, which the woodcutters below attacked at the base, strik-

ing it with heavy blows which resounded through all the rest of the wood.

When the base of the tree seemed pierced deeply enough, some men commenced dragging, to the accompaniment of a signal cry in which all joined harmoniously, at the rope attached to the top. All of a sudden, the immense column cracked and tumbled to the earth with the dull sound and shock of a distant cannon-shot. Each day the wood grew thinner, losing its trees one by one as an army loses its soldiers.

Renardet no longer walked up and down. He remained from morning till night, contemplating, motionless, with his hands behind his back, the slow death of his wood. When a tree fell, he placed his foot on it as if it were a corpse. Then he raised his eyes to the next with a kind of secret, calm impatience, as if he expected or hoped for something at the end of this massacre.

Meanwhile, they were approaching the place where little Louise Roque had been found. At length, they came to it—one evening, at the hour of twilight.

As it was dark, the sky being overcast, the woodcutters wanted to stop their work, putting off till next day the fall of an enormous beech-tree. But Renardet objected to this, insisting that even at this late hour they should lop and cut down this giant, which had overshadowed and seen the crime.

When the lopper had laid it bare, had finished its toilet for the guillotine, and the woodcutters had sapped its base, five men commenced hauling at the rope attached to the top.

The tree resisted; its powerful trunk, although cut half-way through, was as rigid as iron. The workmen, altogether,

with a sort of regular jump, strained at the rope, stooping down to the ground, and they gave vent to a cry with lungs out of breath, so as to indicate and direct their efforts.

Two woodcutters stood close to the giant, with axes in their grip, like two executioners ready to strike once more, and Renardet, motionless, with his hand on the bark, awaited the fall with an uneasy, nervous feeling.

One of the men said to him:

“You’re too near, Monsieur le Maire. When it falls, it may hurt you.”

He did not reply and did not recoil. He seemed ready to catch the beech-tree in his open arms in order to cast it on the ground like a wrestler.

All at once, at the foot of the tall column of wood there was a shudder which seemed to run to the top, like a painful shiver; it bent slightly, ready to fall, but still resisted. The men, in a state of excitement, stiffened their arms, renewed their efforts with greater vigor, and, just as the tree, breaking, came crashing down; Renardet suddenly made a forward step, then stopped, his shoulders raised to receive the irresistible shock, the mortal blow which would crush him to the earth.

But the beech-tree, having deviated a little, only grazed against his loins, throwing him on his face five metres away.

The workmen rushed forward to lift him up. He had already risen to his knees, stupefied, with wandering eyes, and passing his hand across his forehead, as if he were awaking out of an attack of madness.

When he had got to his feet once more, the men, astonished, questioned

him, not being able to understand what he had done. He replied, in faltering tones, that he had had for a moment a fit of abstraction, or rather a return to the days of his childhood, that he imagined he had to pass under that tree, just as street-boys rush in front of vehicles driving rapidly past, that he had played at danger, that, for the past eight days, he felt this desire growing stronger within him, asking himself whether, every time a tree was cracking, was on the point of falling, he could pass beneath it without being touched. It was a piece of stupidity, he confessed; but everyone has these moments of insanity, these temptations to boyish folly.

He made this explanation in a slow tone, searching for his words and speaking in a stupefied fashion.

Then he went off saying:

"Till to-morrow, my friends—till to-morrow."

As soon as he had reached his study, he sat down before his table, which his lamp, covered with a shade, lighted up brightly, and, clasping his hands over his forehead, began to cry.

He remained crying for a long time, then wiped his eyes, raised his head, and looked at the clock. It was not yet six o'clock.

"I have time before dinner."

And he went to the door and locked it. He then came back, and sat down before his table. He pulled out a drawer in the middle of it, and taking from it a revolver, laid it down over his papers, under the glare of the lamp. The barrel of the firearm glittered, and cast reflections which resembled flames.

Renardet gazed at it for some time

with the uneasy glance of a drunken man; then he rose and began to pace up and down the room.

He walked from one end of the apartment to the other, stopped from time to time and started to pace up and down again a moment afterward. Suddenly, he opened the door of his dressing-room, steeped a towel in the water-jug and moistened his forehead, as he had done on the morning of the crime.

Then he began to walk up and down once more. Each time he passed the table the gleaming revolver attracted his glance, and tempted his hand; but he kept watching the clock, thinking:

"I have still time."

It struck half past six. Then he took up the revolver, opened his mouth wide with a frightful grimace, and stuck the barrel into it, as if he wanted to swallow it. He remained in this position for some seconds without moving, his finger on the lock; then, suddenly, seized with a shudder of horror, he dropped the pistol on the carpet, and fell back on his armchair, sobbing:

"I can't. I dare not! My God! My God! My God! How can I have the courage to kill myself?"

There was a knock at the door. He rose up in a stupefied condition. A servant said:

"Monsieur's dinner is ready."

He replied: "All right. I'm going down."

He picked up the revolver, locked it up again in the drawer, then looked at himself in the glass over the mantel-piece to see whether his face did not look too much troubled. It was as red as usual, a little redder perhaps. That

was all. He went down, and seated himself before the table.

He ate slowly, like a man who wants to drag on the meal, who does not want to be alone with himself.

Then he smoked several pipes in the dining-room while the plates were being removed. After that, he went back to his room.

As soon as he was alone, he looked under his bed, opened all his cupboards, explored every corner, rummaged through all the furniture. Then he lighted the tapers over the mantelpiece, and, turning round several times, ran his eye all over the apartment in an anguish of terror that made his face lose its color, for he knew well that he was going to see her, as he did every night—little Louise Roque, the little girl he had violated and afterward strangled.

Every night the odious vision came back again. First, it sounded in his ears like the snorting that is made by a thrashing machine or the distant passage of a train over a bridge. Then he commenced to pant, to feel suffocated, and had to unbutton his shirt-collar and loosen his belt. He moved about to make his blood circulate, he tried to read, he attempted to sing. It was in vain. His thoughts, in spite of himself, went back to the day of the murder, made him go through it again in all its most secret details, with all the violent emotions he had experienced from first to last.

He had felt on rising up that morning, the morning of the horrible day, a little vertigo and dizziness which he attributed to the heat, so that he remained in his room till the time came for lunch.

After the meal he had taken a siesta,

then, toward the close of the afternoon, he had gone out to breathe the fresh, soothing breeze under the trees in the wood.

But, as soon as he was outside, the heavy scorching air of the plain oppressed him more. The sun, still high in the heavens, poured out on the parched, dry, and thirsty soil, floods of ardent light. Not a breath of wind stirred the leaves. Beasts and birds, even the grasshoppers, were silent. Renardet reached the tall trees, and began to walk over the moss where the Brindelle sent forth a slight, cool vapor under the immense roof of trees. But he felt ill at ease. It seemed to him that an unknown, invisible hand was squeezing his neck, and he could scarcely think rationally, having usually few ideas in his head. For the last three months, only one thought haunted him, the thought of marrying again. He suffered from living alone, suffered from it morally and physically. Accustomed for ten years past to feeling a woman near him, habituated to her presence every moment, to her embrace each successive day, he had need, an imperious and perplexing need of incessant contact with her and the regular touch of her lips. Since Madame Renardet's death, he had suffered continually without knowing why, had suffered from not feeling her dress brush against his legs every day, and, above all, from no longer being able to grow calm and languid in her arms. He had been scarcely six months a widower, and he had already been looking out through the district for some young girl or some widow he might marry when his period of mourning was at an end.

He had a chaste soul, but it was lodged in a vigorous Herculean body, and carnal images began to disturb his sleep and his vigils. He drove them away; they came back again; and he murmured from time to time, smiling at himself:

"Here I am, like St. Antony."

Having had this morning several besetting visions, the desire suddenly came into his breast to bathe in the Brindelle in order to refresh himself and reduce his feverishness.

He knew, a little further on, of a large deep spot where the people of the neighborhood came sometimes to take a dip in the summer. He went there.

Thick willow-trees hid this clear pool of water where the current rested and went to sleep for a little while before starting on its way again. Renardet, as he appeared, thought he heard a light sound, a faint plash which was not that of the stream or the banks. He softly put aside the leaves and looked. A little girl, quite naked in the transparent water, was beating the waves with both hands, dancing about in them a little, and dipping herself with pretty movements. She was not a child nor was she yet a woman. She was plump and well formed, yet had an air of youthful precocity, as of one who had grown rapidly, and who was now almost ripe. He no longer moved, overcome with surprise, with a pang of desire, holding his breath with a strange, poignant emotion. He remained there, his heart beating as if one of his sensual dreams had just been realized; as if an impure fairy had conjured up before him this young creature, this little rustic Venus born of the

river foam, who was making his heart beat faster.

Suddenly the little girl came out of the water, and without seeing him came over to where he stood looking for her clothes in order to dress herself. While she was gradually approaching him with little hesitating steps, through fear of the sharp pointed stones, he felt himself pushed toward her by an irresistible force, by a bestial transport of passion, which stirred up all his carnality, stupefied his soul, and made him tremble from head to foot.

She remained standing some seconds behind the willow-tree which concealed him from view. Then, losing his reason entirely, he opened the branches, rushed on her, and seized her in his arms. She fell, too scared to offer any resistance, too much terror-stricken to cry out, and he possessed her without understanding what he was doing.

He woke up from his crime, as one wakes out of a nightmare. The child burst out weeping.

He said:

"Hold your tongue! Hold your tongue! I'll give you money."

But she did not hear him, she went on sobbing.

He went on:

"Come now, hold your tongue! Do hold your tongue. Keep quiet."

She still kept shrieking, writhing in the effort to get away from him. He suddenly realized that he was ruined, and he caught her by the neck to stop her from uttering these heartrending, dreadful screams. As she continued to struggle with the desperate strength of a being who is flying from death, he pressed his enormous hands on that little

throat swollen with cries. In a few seconds he had strangled her, so furiously did he grip her, yet not intending to kill but only to silence her.

Then he rose up overwhelmed with horror.

She lay before him with her face bleeding and blackened. He was going to rush away when there sprang up in his agitated soul the mysterious and undefined instinct that guides all beings in the hour of danger.

It was necessary to throw the body into the water; but he did not; another impulse drove him toward the clothes, of which he made a thin parcel. Then, as he had a piece of twine, he tied it up and hid it in a deep portion of the stream, under the trunk of a tree, the foot of which was immersed in the Brindelle.

Then he went off at a rapid pace, reached the meadows, took a wide turn in order to show himself to peasants who dwelt some distance away on the opposite side of the district, and came back to dine at the usual hour, telling his servants all that was supposed to have happened during his walk.

He slept, however, that night—slept with a heavy, brutish sleep, such as the sleep of persons condemned to death must occasionally be. He opened his eyes at the first glimmer of dawn, and waited, tortured by the fear of having his crime discovered, for his usual waking hour.

Then he would have to be present at all the stages of the inquiry as to the cause of death. He did so after the fashion of a somnambulist, in a hallucination which showed him things and human beings in a sort of dream, in a

cloud of intoxication, with that dubious sense of unreality which perplexes the mind at times of the greatest catastrophes.

The only thing that pierced his heart was La Roque's cry of anguish. At that moment he felt inclined to cast himself at the old woman's feet, and to exclaim:

"'Tis I."

But he restrained himself. He went back, however, during the night, to fish up the dead girl's wooden shoes, in order to carry them to her mother's threshold.

As long as the inquiry lasted, so long as it was necessary to guide and aid justice, he was calm, master of himself, sly and smiling. He discussed quietly with the magistrates all the suppositions that passed through their minds, combated their opinions, and demolished their arguments. He even took a keen and mournful pleasure in disturbing their investigations, in confuting their ideas, in showing the innocence of those whom they suspected.

But from the day when the investigation came to a close, he became gradually nervous, more excitable than he had been before, although he mastered his irritability. Sudden noises made him jump up with fear; he shuddered at the slightest thing, trembled sometimes from head to foot when a fly alighted on his forehead. Then he was seized with an imperious desire for motion, which compelled him to keep continually on foot, and made him remain up whole nights walking to and fro in his own room.

It was not that he was goaded by remorse. His brutal mind did not lend itself to any shade of sentiment or of

moral terror. A man of energy and even of violence, born to make war, to ravage conquered countries, and to massacre the vanquished, full of the savage instincts of the hunter and the fighter, he scarcely took count of human life. Though he respected the Church through policy, he believed neither in God nor in the devil, expecting consequently in another life neither chastisement nor recompense for his acts. As his sole creed, he retained a vague philosophy composed of all the ideas of the encyclopedists of the last century. He regarded religion as a moral sanction of the law, both one and the other having been invented by men to regulate social relations.

To kill anyone in a duel, or in a battle, or in a quarrel, or by accident, or for the sake of revenge, or even through bravado, would have seemed to him an amusing and clever thing, and would not have left more impression on his mind than a shot fired at a hare; but he had experienced a profound emotion at the murder of this child. He had, in the first place, perpetrated it in the distraction of an irresistible gust of passion, in a sort of sensual tempest that had overpowered his reason. And he had cherished in his heart, cherished in his flesh, cherished on his lips, cherished even to the very tips of his murderous fingers, a kind of bestial love, as well as a feeling of horror and grief, toward this little girl he had surprised and basely killed. Every moment his thoughts returned to that horrible scene, and, though he endeavored to drive away the picture from his mind, though he put it aside with terror, with disgust, he felt it surging through his soul,

moving about in him, waiting incessantly for the moment to reappear.

Then, in the night, he was afraid, afraid of the shadows falling around him. He did not yet know why the darkness seemed frightful to him; but he instinctively feared it, felt that it was peopled with terrors. The bright daylight did not lend itself to fears. Things and beings were seen there; there only natural things and beings which could exhibit themselves in the light of day could be met. But the night, the impenetrable night, thicker than walls, and empty, the infinite night, so black, so vast, in which one might brush against frightful things, the night when one feels that mysterious terror is wandering, prowling about, appeared to him to conceal an unknown danger, close and menacing.

What was it?

He knew it ere long. As he sat in his armchair, rather late, one evening, when he could not sleep, he thought he saw the curtain of his window move. He waited, in an uneasy state of mind, with beating heart. The drapery did not stir, then, all of a sudden it moved once more. He did not venture to rise up; he no longer ventured to breathe, and yet he was brave. He had often fought, and he would have liked to catch thieves in his house.

Was it true that this curtain did move? he asked himself, fearing that his eyes had deceived him. It was, moreover, such a slight thing, a gentle flutter of lace, a kind of trembling in its folds, less than such an undulation as is caused by the wind.

Renardet sat still, with staring eyes, and outstretched neck. Then he sprang

to his feet abruptly, ashamed of his fear, took four steps, seized the drapery with both hands, and pulled it wide apart. At first, he saw nothing but darkened glass, resembling plates of glittering ink. The night, the vast, impenetrable night stretched out before him as far as the invisible horizon. He remained standing in front of the illimitable shadow, and suddenly perceived a light, a moving light, which seemed some distance away.

Then he put his face close to the windowpane, thinking that a person looking for crayfish might be poaching in the Brindelle, for it was past midnight. The light rose up at the edge of the stream, under the trees. As he was not yet able to see clearly, Renardet placed his hands over his eyes. Suddenly this light became an illumination, and he beheld little Louise Roque naked and bleeding on the moss. He recoiled frozen with horror, sank into his chair, and fell backward. He remained there some minutes, his soul in distress; then he sat up and began to reflect. He had had a hallucination—that was all: a hallucination due to the fact that a marauder of the night was walking with a lantern in his hand near the water's edge. What was there astonishing, besides, in the circumstance that the recollection of his crime should sometimes bring before him the vision of the dead girl?

He rose up, swallowed a glass of wine, and sat down again. He thought:

“What am I to do if this came back?”

And it did come back; he felt it; he was sure of it. Already his glance was drawn toward the window; it called him; it attracted him. In order to

avoid looking at it, he turned aside his chair. Then, he took a book and tried to read; but it seemed to him that he presently heard something stirring behind him, and he swung round his arm-chair on one foot.

The curtain still moved—unquestionably, it did move this time; he could no longer have any doubt about it.

He rushed forward and seized it in his grasp so violently that he knocked it down with its fastener. Then, he eagerly pressed his face against the glass. He saw nothing. All was black without; and he breathed with the delight of a man whose life has just been saved.

Then he went back to his chair, and sat down again; but almost immediately he felt a longing to look out through the window once more. Since the curtain had fallen, the space in front of him made a sort of dark patch, fascinating and terrible, on the obscure landscape. In order not to yield to this dangerous temptation, he took off his clothes, extinguished the lamp, and lay down, shutting his eyes.

Lying on his back motionless, his skin hot and moist, he awaited sleep. Suddenly a great gleam of light flashed across his eyelids. He opened them believing that his dwelling was on fire. All was black as before, and he leaned on his elbow in order to try to distinguish his window, which had still for him an unconquerable attraction. By dint of straining his eyes, he could perceive some stars, and he arose, groped his way across the room, discovered the panes with his outstretched hands, and placed his forehead close to them. There below, under the trees, the body of the

little girl glittered like phosphorus, lighting up the surrounding darkness.

Renardet uttered a cry and rushed toward his bed, where he lay till morning, his head hidden under the pillow.

From that moment, his life became intolerable. He passed his days in apprehension of each succeeding night; and each night the vision came back again. As soon as he had locked himself up in his room, he strove to struggle; but in vain. An irresistible force lifted him up and pushed him against the glass, as if to call the phantom, and ere long he saw it lying in the spot where the crime was committed, lying with arms and legs outspread, just in the way the body had been found.

Then the dead girl rose up and came toward him with little steps just as the child had done when she came out of the river. She advanced quietly, passing straight across the grass, and over the border of withered flowers. Then she rose up into the air toward Renardet's window. She came toward him, as she had come on the day of the crime. And the man recoiled before the apparition—he retreated to his bed, and sank down upon it, knowing well that the little one had entered the room, and that she now was standing behind the curtain, which presently moved. And until daybreak, he kept staring at this curtain, with a fixed glance, ever waiting to see his victim depart.

But she did not show herself any more; she remained there behind the curtain which quivered tremulously now and then.

And Renardet, his fingers clinging to the bedclothes, squeezed them as he had

squeezed the throat of little Louise Roque.

He heard the clock striking the hours; and in the stillness the pendulum kept time with the loud beating of his heart. And he suffered, the wretched man, more than any man had ever suffered before.

Then, as soon as a white streak of light on the ceiling announced the approaching day, he felt himself free, alone at last, alone in his room; and then he went to sleep. He slept some hours—a restless, feverish sleep in which he retraced in dreams the horrible vision of the night just past.

When, later on, he went down to breakfast, he felt exhausted as if after prodigious fatigue; and he scarcely ate anything, haunted as he was by the fear of what he had seen the night before.

He knew, however, that it was not an apparition—that the dead do not come back, and that his sick soul, possessed by one thought alone, by an indelible remembrance, was the only cause of his punishment, was the only evoker of that awful image, brought back by it to life, called up by it and raised by it before his eyes, in which the ineffaceable resemblance remained imprinted. But he knew, too, that he could not cure it, that he could never escape from the savage persecution of his memory; and he resolved to die, rather than endure these tortures any longer.

Then, he pondered how he would kill himself. He wished for some simple and natural death which would preclude the idea of suicide. For he clung to his reputation, to the name bequeathed to him by his ancestors; and if there

was any suspicion as to the cause of his death, people's thoughts might be perhaps directed toward the mysterious crime, toward the murderer who could not be found, and they would not hesitate to accuse him.

A strange idea came into his head, that of letting himself be crushed by the tree at the foot of which he had assassinated little Louise Roque. So he determined to have the wood cut down and to simulate an accident. But the beech-tree refused to smash his ribs.

Returning to his house, a prey to utter despair, he had snatched up his revolver, and then he did not dare to fire it.

The dinner bell summoned him. He could eat nothing, and went upstairs again. But he did not know what he was going to do. Now that he had escaped the first time, he felt himself a coward. Presently, he would be ready, fortified, decided, master of his courage and of his resolution; just now, he was weak, and feared death as much as he did the dead girl.

He faltered out to himself:

"I will not venture it again—I will not venture it."

Then he glanced with terror, first at the revolver on the table, and next at the curtain which hid his window. It seemed to him, moreover, that something horrible would occur as soon as his life was ended. Something? What? A meeting with her, perhaps! She was watching for him; she was waiting for him; she was calling him; and her object was to seize him in her turn, to exhibit herself to him every night so that she might draw him toward the doom

that would avenge her, and lead him to death.

He began to cry like a child, repeating:

"I will not venture it again—I will not venture it,"

Then, he fell on his knees, and murmured: "My God! my God!" without believing, nevertheless, in God. He no longer dared, in fact, to look out through his window where he knew the apparition was visible, nor at the table where his revolver gleamed.

When he had risen up, he said:

"This cannot last; there must be an end of it."

The sound of his voice in the silent room made a shiver of fear pass through his limbs, but, as he could not come to a decision, as he felt certain that his finger would always refuse to pull the trigger of his revolver, he turned round to hide his head under the bedclothes, and to plunge into reflection.

He would have to find some way in which he could force himself to die, to invent some device against himself, which would not permit of any hesitation on his part, any delay, any possible regrets. He began to envy condemned criminals who are led to the scaffold surrounded by soldiers. Oh! if he could only beg of some one to shoot him; if he could, confessing the state of his soul, confessing his crime to a sure friend who would never divulge it, obtain from him death.

But from whom could he ask this terrible service? From whom? He cast about for one among his friends whom he knew intimately. The doctor? No, he would talk about it afterward, most certainly. And suddenly a fantastic

idea entered his mind. He would write to the examining magistrate, who was on terms of close friendship with him and would denounce himself as the perpetrator of the crime. He would in this letter confess everything, revealing how his soul had been tortured, how he had resolved to die, how he had hesitated about carrying out his resolution, and what means he had employed to strengthen his failing courage. And in the name of their old friendship he would implore of the other to destroy the letter as soon as he had ascertained that the culprit had inflicted justice on himself. Renardet could rely on this magistrate; he knew him to be sure, discreet, incapable of even an idle word. He was one of those men who have an inflexible conscience, governed, directed, regulated by their reason alone.

Scarcely had he formed this project when a strange feeling of joy took possession of his heart. He was calm now. He would write his letter slowly, then at daybreak he would deposit it in the box nailed to the wall in his office, then he would ascend his tower to watch for the postman's arrival, and when the man in the blue blouse came in sight, he would cast himself headlong on to the rocks on which the foundations rested. First he would take care to be seen by the workmen who were cutting down his wood. He would then climb to the parapet some distance up which bore the flagstaff displayed on *fête* days. He would smash this pole with a shake and precipitate it along with him.

Who would suspect that it was not an accident? And he would be dashed to pieces, having regard to his weight and the height of the tower.

Presently he got out of bed, went over to the table, and began to write. He omitted nothing, not a single detail of the crime, not a single detail of the torments of his heart, and he ended by announcing that he had passed sentence on himself—that he was going to execute the criminal—and begged of his friend, his old friend, to be careful that there should never be any stain on his memory.

When he had finished his letter, he saw that the day had dawned.

He closed it, sealed it, and wrote the address; then he descended with light steps, hurried toward the little white box fastened to the wall in the corner of the farmhouse, and when he had thrown into it the fatal paper which made his hand tremble, he came back quickly, shot the bolts of the great door, and climbed up to his tower to wait for the passing of the postman, who would convey his death sentence.

He felt self-possessed, now. Liberated! Saved!

A cold dry wind, an icy wind, passed across his face. He inhaled it eagerly, with open mouth, drinking in its chilling kiss. The sky was red, with a burning red, the red of winter, and all the plain whitened with frost glistened under the first rays of the sun, as if it had been powdered with bruised glass.

Renardet, standing up, with his head bare, gazed at the vast tract of country before him, the meadow to the left, and to the right the village whose chimneys were beginning to smoke with the preparations for the morning meal. At his feet he saw the Brindelle flowing toward the rocks, where he would soon be crushed to death. He felt himself re-

born on that beautiful frosty morning, full of strength, full of life. The light bathed him and penetrated him like a new-born hope. A thousand recollections assailed him, recollections of similar mornings, of rapid walks, the hard earth which rang under his footsteps, of happy chases on the edges of pools where wild ducks sleep. At the good things that he loved, the good things of existence rushed into memory, penetrated him with fresh desires, awakened all the vigorous appetites of his active, powerful body.

And he was about to die? Why? He was going to kill himself stupidly, because he was afraid of a shadow—afraid of nothing. He was still rich and in the prime of life! What folly! All he wanted was distraction, absence, a voyage in order to forget.

This night even he had not seen the little girl because his mind was preoccupied, and so had wandered toward some other subject. Perhaps he would not see her any more? And even if she still haunted him in his house, certainly she would not follow him elsewhere! The earth was wide, the future was long.

Why die?

His glance traveled across the meadows, and he perceived a blue spot in the path which wound along-side of the Brindelle. It was Mederic coming to bring letters from the town and to carry away those of the village.

Renardet got a start, a sensation of pain shot through his breast, and he rushed toward the winding staircase to get back his letter, to demand it back from the postman. Little did it matter to him now whether he was seen. He hurried across the grass moistened

by the light frost of the previous night, and he arrived in front of the box in the corner of the farmhouse exactly at the same time as the letter-carrier.

The latter had opened the little wooden door, and drew forth the papers deposited there by the inhabitants of the locality.

Renardet said to him:

“Good morrow, Mederic.”

“Good morrow, M’sieu’ le Maire.”

“I say, Mederic, I threw a letter into the box that I want back again. I came to ask you to give it back to me.”

“That’s all right, M’sieu’ le Maire—you’ll get it.”

And the postman raised his eyes. He stood petrified at the sight of Renardet’s face. The Mayor’s cheeks were purple, his eyes were glaring with black circles round them as if they were sunk in his head, his hair was all tangled, his beard untrimmed, his neck-tie unfastened. It was evident that he had not gone to bed.

The postman asked:

“Are you ill, M’sieu’ le Maire?”

The other suddenly comprehending that his appearance must be unusual, lost countenance and faltered:

“Oh! no—oh! no. Only I jumped out of bed to ask you for this letter. I was asleep. You understand?”

Said Mederic: “What letter?”

“The one you are going to give back to me.”

Mederic now began to hesitate. The mayor’s attitude did not strike him as natural. There was perhaps a secret in that letter, a political secret. He knew Renardet was not a Republican,

and he knew all the tricks and chicaneries employed at elections.

He asked:

"To whom is it addressed, this letter of yours?"

"To M. Putoin, the examining magistrate—you know my friend, M. Putoin, well!"

The postman searched through the papers, and found the one asked for. Then he began looking at it, turning it round and round between his fingers, much perplexed, much troubled by the fear of committing a grave offense or of making an enemy for himself of the mayor.

Seeing his hesitation, Renardet made a movement for the purpose of seizing the letter and snatching it away from him. This abrupt action convinced Mederic that some important secret was at stake and made him resolve to do his duty, cost what it might.

So he flung the letter into his bag and fastened it up, with the reply:

"No, I can't, M'sieu' le Maire. From the moment it is addressed and sent to the magistrate, I can't."

A dreadful pang wrung Renardet's heart, and he murmured:

"Why, you know me well. You are even able to recognize my handwriting. I tell you I want that paper."

"I can't."

"Look here, Mederic, you know that I'm incapable of deceiving you—I tell you I want it."

"No, I can't."

A tremor of rage passed through Renardet's soul.

"Damn it all, take care! You know that I don't go in for chaffing, and that I could get you out of your job,

my good fellow, and without much delay either. And then, I am the mayor of the district after all; and I now order you to give me back that paper."

The postman answered firmly:

"No, I can't, M'sieu' le Maire."

Thereupon Renardet, losing his head, caught hold of the postman's arms in order to take away his bag; but, freeing himself by a strong effort, and springing backward, the letter-carrier raised his holly stick. Without losing his temper, he said emphatically:

"Don't touch me, M'sieu' le Maire, or I'll strike. Take care, I'm only doing my duty!"

Feeling that he was lost, Renardet suddenly became humble, gentle, appealing to him like a crying child:

"Look here, look here, my friend, give me back that letter, and I'll give you money. Stop! Stop! I'll give you a hundred francs you understand—a hundred francs!"

The postman turned on his heel and started on his journey.

Renardet followed him, out of breath, faltering:

"Mederic, Mederic, listen! I'll give you a thousand francs, you understand—a thousand francs."

The postman still went on without giving any answer.

Renardet went on:

"I'll make your fortune, you understand—whatever you wish—fifty thousand francs—fifty thousand francs—fifty thousand francs for that letter! What does it matter to you? You won't? Well, a hundred thousand—I say—a hundred thousand francs—a hundred thousand francs."

The postman turned back, his face hard, his eye severe:

"Enough of this, or else I'll repeat to the magistrate everything you have just said to me."

Renardet stopped abruptly. It was all over. He turned back and rushed toward his house, running like a hunted animal.

Then, in his turn, Mederic stopped, and watched this flight with stupefaction. He saw the mayor re-entering his own house and he waited still as if something astonishing was about to happen.

Presently the tall form of Renardet appeared on the summit of the Fox's Tower. He ran round the platform

like a madman. Then he seized the flagstaff and shook it furiously without succeeding in breaking it; then, all of a sudden, like a swimmer taking a plunge, he dived into the air with his two hands in front of him.

Mederic rushed forward to give succor. As he crossed the park, he saw the woodcutters going to work. He called out to them, telling them an accident had occurred, and at the foot of the walls they found a bleeding body the head of which was crushed on a rock. The Brindelle surrounded this rock, and over its clear, calm waters, swollen at this point, could be seen a long, thin, red stream of mingled brains and blood,

THE END

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